

The World to come :
OR,
DISCOURSES
ON THE
JOYS OR SORROWS
OF
Departed Souls at Death,
AND THE
Glory or Terror of the Resurrection.
VOL. II.

Wherein, after some Representations of the
Happiness of HEAVEN, and a Preparation
for it, there follows a Rational and Scriptural
Account of the Punishments in HELL, and
a Proof of their Eternal Duration.

With a plain ANSWER to all the most plausible OBJECTIONS.

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T H E
P R E F A C E.

*I*N the first Volume of these Discourses I made an Introduction to them, by endeavouring to prove, that at the Departure of the Soul from the Body, by Death, the Rewards or Punishments, i. e. the Joys or the Sorrows, of the other World are appointed to commence : And I hope I have there given, from the Evidence of Scripture, such Arguments to support this Doctrine, as that the Faith of Christians may not be stagger'd and confounded by different Opinions, or made to wait for these Events, thro' all the many Years that may arise between Death and the Resurrection.

I know nothing besides this that is made a Matter of Controversy in that Volume ; and I hope those Sermons, and these that follow, by the Blessing of God, will be made happily useful to Christians, to awaken and warn them against the Danger of being seized by Death in a State unprepar'd for the Presence of God, and the Happiness of Heaven, and to raise the Comforts and Joys of many pious Souls in the lively Expectation of future Blessedness.

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The last Discourses of this second Volume, especially the Eternity of the Punishments of Hell, have been in latter and former Years made a Matter of dispute; and were I to pursue my Enquiries into this Doctrine, only by the Aids of the Light of Nature and Reason, I fear my natural Tenderneſs might warp me aſide from the Rules and the Demands of ſtrict Juſtice, and the wiſe and holy Government of the Great God.

But as I confine myſelf almoſt intirely to the Revelation of Scripture in all my Searches into the Things of revealed Religion and Chriſtianity, I am conſtrain'd to forget or to lay aſide that Softneſs and Tenderneſs of animal Nature which might lead me aſtray, and to follow the unerring Dictates of the Word of God.

The Scripture frequently, and in the plainest and ſtrongeſt manner, aſſerts the everlaſting Punishment of Sinners in Hell; and that by all the Methods of Expreſſion which are uſed in Scripture to ſignify an everlaſting Continuance.

God's utter Hatred and Averſion to Sin, in this perpetual Punishment of it, are manifeſted many ways; (1.) by the juſt and ſevere Threatnings of the wiſe and righteous Governor of the World, which are ſcatter'd up and down in his Word. (2.) By the Veracity of God

God in his Intimations or Narratives of past Events, as Jude v. 7. Sodom and Gomorrha suffering the Vengeance of eternal Fire. (3.) By his express Predictions, Matt. xxv. 46. These shall go away into everlasting Punishment. 2 Thess. i. 9. Who shall be punished with everlasting Destruction ; and I might add, (4.) by the Veracity and Truth of all his holy Prophets and Apostles, and his Son Jesus Christ at the Head of them, whom he has sent to acquaint Mankind with the Rules of their Duty, and the certain Judgment of God in a holy Correspondence therewith, and that in such Words, as seem to admit of no Way of Escape, or of Hope for the condemned Criminals.

I must confess here, if it were possible for the Great and Blessed God any other Way to vindicate his own eternal and unchangeable Hatred of Sin, the inflexible Justice of his Government, the Wisdom of his severe Threatnings, and the Veracity of his Predictions, if it were also possible for him, without this terrible Execution, to vindicate the Veracity, Sincerity and Wisdom of the Prophets and Apostles, and Jesus Christ his Son, the greatest and chiefest of his divine Messengers ; and then if the Blessed God should at any time, in

a Consistence with his glorious and incomprehensible Perfections, release those wretched Creatures from their acute Pains and long Imprisonment in Hell, either with a Design of the utter Destruction of their Beings by Annihilation, or to put them into some unknown World, upon a new Foot of Trial, I think I ought chearfully and joyfully to accept this Appointment of God, for the Good of Millions of my Fellow-Creatures, and add my Joys and Praises to all the Songs and Triumphs of the heavenly World in the Day of such a divine and glorious Release of these Prisoners.

But I feel myself under a Necessity of confessing, that I am utterly unable to solve these Difficulties according to the Discoveries of the New Testament, which must be my constant Rule of Faith, and Hope, and Expectation, with regard to myself and others. I have read the strongest and best Writers on the other Side, yet after all my Studies I have not been able to find any way how these Difficulties may be removed, and how the divine Perfections, and the Conduct of God in his Word, may be fairly vindicated without the Establishment of this Doctrine, as awful and formidable as it is.

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The Ways *indeed* of the Great God and his Thoughts are above our Thoughts and our Ways, as the Heavens are above the Earth ; yet I must rest and acquiesce where our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father's chief Minister both of his Wrath and his Love, has left me in the divine Revelations of Scripture ; and I am constrain'd therefore to leave these unhappy Creatures under the Chains of everlasting Darkness, into which they have cast themselves by their wilful Iniquities, till the Blessed God shall see fit to release them.

This would be indeed such a new, such an astonishing and universal Jubilee, both for Devils and wicked Men, as must fill Heaven, Earth and Hell with Hallelujahs and Joy : In the mean time 'tis my ardent Wish, that this awful Sense of the Terrors of the Almighty, and his everlasting Anger, which the Word of the Great God denounces, may awaken some Souls timely to bethink themselves of the dreadful Danger into which they are running, before these Terrors seize them at Death, and begin to be executed upon them without Release and without Hope.

P O S T S C R I P T.

WHEREAS it hath pleased God for these two Years past to cut me off from the delightful Work of my Study, and for the greatest Part of the Time to with-hold me from all publick Service in my Station by several Weaknesses of Nature; and whereas I had many Writings lying by me which were quite finished and corrected for the Press, my Friends might naturally expect that those Pieces which were most nearly, or quite finished and revised, would first appear in the World, because it is much easier to correct three Sheets in a Week from the Press, than it is in as many Months to revise or to finish any imperfect Manuscript.

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I think proper therefore here to acquaint them, that as fast as the Providence of God shall restore my Health and Strength, I shall endeavour to hasten the finishing of such as are yet imperfect: Some of which perhaps the Publick may more earnestly expect.

Stoke-Newington,
Feb. 21. 1744, 5



DISCOURSE VIII.

A Soul prepar'd for Heaven.

2 COR. V. 5.

Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same Thing, is God.

WHEN this Apostle designs to entertain our Hope in the noblest Manner, and raise our Faith to its highest Joys, he generally calls our Thoughts far away from all present and visible Things, and sends them forward to the great and glorious Day of the Resurrection: He points our Meditations to take a distant Prospect of the final and compleat Happiness of the Saints in Heaven, when their Bodies shall be raised shining and immortal; whereas it is but seldom that he takes Notice of the Heaven of separate Souls, or that Part of our future Happiness which commences at the Hour of Death. But in this Chapter the holy Writer seems to keep both these Heavens in his Eye, and speaks of that Blessedness with which the Spirits of the Just shall enjoy in the *Presence of the Lord*, as soon as *they are absent from the Body*, and yet leads our Souls onwards also to our last and most perfect State of Happiness, which is delay'd till our corruptible Bodies shall be raised from the Dust, and Mortality shall be swallowed up in Life. *We know*, saith he in the first Verse of this Chapter, *we know that as soon as our mortal Tabernacle, in which we now dwell, is dissolved, we have a Building ready for us in the Heavens*; i. e. an Investiture in a glorious State of Holiness and Immortality, which waits to receive our Spirits when we drop this dying Flesh: Yet the Felicities of this Paradise, or first Heaven shall receive an unspeakable Addition and Advancement, when *Christ shall come the second Time*, with all his Saints to compleat our Salvation.

But which Heaven soever we arrive at, whether it be this of the Separate State, or that when our Bodies shall be restor'd, still we must be *wrought up* to a proper Fitness for it *by God* himself; and as the End of this Verse tells us, *he gives us his own Spirit as an Earnest* of these Blessings.

The Observation which shall be the Subject of my Discourse, is this: *Those who shall enjoy the heavenly Blessedness hereafter, must be prepared for it here in this World, by the Operation of the blessed God.*

Here we must take Notice in the first Place, that since we are sinful and guilty Creatures in ourselves, and have forfeited all our Pretences to the Favour of God and Happiness, we must be restor'd to his Favour, we must have our Sins forgiven, we must be justified in his Sight with an everlasting Righteousness, we must be adopted as the Children of God, and have a Right and Title given us to the heavenly Inheritance, before we can enter into it, or possess it; and this Blessing is procured for us by the Obedience and Death of the Son of God. 'Tis in his Blood that we find an Atonement for our Iniquities, and we must be made *Heirs* of Glory, by becoming the adopted Children of God, and so *we are Joint-Heirs* with his Son *Jesus*, and shall be glorify'd with him, *Rom. viii. 17.*

And it is by a true and living Faith in the Son of God, that we become Partakers of this Blessing. God has *set forth* his Son *Jesus* as a Propitiation for Sinners thro' Faith in his Blood, *Rom. iii. 24.* We are justified by Faith in his Blood, and have Hope of eternal Life, thro' him, *Rom. v.* We also receive our Adoption, and become the Children of God through Faith in Christ *Jesus*, *Gal. iii. 26.* and thereby we obtain a Title to some Mansion in our Father's House in Heaven, since *Jesus* our elder Brother, and our Fore-runner, is admitted into it to take a Place there in our Name. This is a very considerable Part of our necessary Preparation for the heavenly World, that we should be Believers in the Son of God, and united to him by a living Faith; and this Faith also is the Gift of God, *Eph. ii. 8.* We are wrought up to it by his Grace.

But as this does not seem to be the chief Thing designed in the Words of my Text, I shall pass it over thus briefly, and apply myself to consider what that further Fitness or

Prepara-

Preparation for Heaven intends, for which we are said here *to be wrought up by God himself*. The former Preparation for Heaven, may rather be said to be a *Relative Change*, which is included in our Pardon or Justification, and alters our State from the Condemnation of Hell, to the Favour and Love of God : But this latter Preparation implies a *real Change* of our Nature by sanctifying Grace, and gives us a Temper of Soul suited to the Business and Blessedness of the heavenly World. This is the *Preparation* which my Text speaks of.

The great Enquiry therefore at present is, *What are those Steps, or gradual Operations, by which the blessed God works us up to this Fitness for Heaven ?*

And here I shall not run over all the Parts and Lineaments of the new Creature, which is formed by Regeneration, nor the particular Operations of converting Grace, whereby we are convinced of Sin, and led to Faith and Repentance, and new Obedience, tho' these are all necessary to this End ; but I shall confine myself only to those Things which have a more immediate Reference to the heavenly Blessedness, and they are such as follow.

1. *God works us up to a Preparation for the heavenly Felicity, by establishing and confirming our Belief, that there is a Heaven provided for the Saints, and by giving us some clearer Acquaintance with the Nature, the Business, and the Blessedness of this Heaven.* All this is done by the Gospel of Christ, and by the secret Operation of the blessed God, teaching us to understand his Gospel.

Alas ! how ignorant were the *Heathen* Sages about any future State for the Righteous ? How bewilder'd were the best of them in all their Imaginations ? How vain were all their Reasonings upon this Subject, and how little Satisfaction could they give to an honest Enquirer, whether there was any Reward provided for good Men beyond this Life ? The Light of Nature was their Guide ; and those in whom this Feeble Taper burnt with the fairest Lustre, were still left in great Darkness about Futurity. As the *Gentile* Philosophers were left in great Uncertainties whether there was any Heaven or no, so were their Conceptions of heavenly Things very absurd and ridiculous ; and their various Fancies about the Nature and Enjoyments of it, were all Impertinence.

And how little Knowledge had the Patriarchs themselves, if we may judge of their Knowledge by the five Books of *Moses*, which give no plain and express Promise of future Happiness in another World, neither to *Abel* nor *Noah*, to *Abraham*, *Isaac*, *Jacob*, or to *Moses* himself? And were it not for some Expressions in the New Testament, and by that XIth Chapter to the *Hebrews*, where we are told, that these good Men sought a heavenly Country, and hoped for Happiness in a future and invisible State, we should sometimes be ready to doubt whether they knew almost any thing of the future Resurrection and Glory.

That great and excellent Man *Job*, had one or two lucid Intervals of peculiar Brightness, which shone upon him from Heaven, in the midst of his Distresses, and raised him above and beyond the common Level of the Dispensation he lived in; yet in the main, when he describes the State of the Dead, how desolate and doleful is his Language, and what heavy Darkeness hangs upon his Hope? See his Expressions, *Job* x. 21, 22. *Let me alone that I may take Comfort a little, before I go whence I shall not return, even to the Land of Darkeness, and the Shadow of Death, a Land of Darkeness as Darkeness itself, and of the Shadow of Death without any Order, and where the Light is as Darkeness.* Mark how this good Man heaps one *Darkness* upon another, and makes so formidable a Gloom as was hardly to be dispelled by the common Notices given to Men in that Age.

And if we look into the *Jewish* Writings in and after the Days of *Moses*, we find the Men of Righteousness frequently entertained with Promises of Corn, and Wine, and Oil, and other Blessings of Sense; and few there were amongst them who saw clearly, and firmly believed the heavenly Inheritance thro' the Types, and Shadows, and Figures of *Canaan*, the Promised Land, which flowed with Milk and Honey.

'Tis granted there are some Hints and Discoveries of a Blessedness beyond the Grave in the Writings of *David*, *Isaiah*, *Daniel*, and some of the Prophets: But the brightest of these Notices fall far short of what the Gospel of our Lord *Jesus Christ* has set before us. The Son of God, who came down from Heaven, where he had lived from before the Creation of this World, has revealed to us infinitely more of the invisible State than all that went before him:

He tells us of the *pure in Heart* enjoying the Sight of God, and conversing with *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, the ancient Saints : He assures us there are many *Mansions in his Father's House*, and that he went to prepare a Place there for his Followers. *I tell you*, says he, *John viii. 38. I tell you the Things which I have seen with my Father.* And when he came again from the Dead, he made it appear to his Disciples that he had brought *Life and Immortality to Light by his Gospel*, 2 Tim. i. 10.

'Tis only the New Testament that gives us so bright and satisfactory an Account what our future Heaven is : The Righteous shall be with God, shall behold him, shall dwell with Christ, and see his Glory ; they shall worship Day and Night in his Temple, and sing the Praises of him that sits upon the Throne, and of the Lamb that has redeemed them by his Blood ; there shall be no Sin, no Sorrow, no Death, nor any more Pain ; they shall have such Satisfaction and Employments as are worthy of a rational Nature, and a Soul refined from Sense and Sin. St. Paul, one of his Disciples, was transported into the *third Heaven* before he died, and there learnt *unspeakable Things*, 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4. and he together with the other Apostles, have published the Glories of that future World which they learnt from Jesus their Lord, and confirmed these Things to our Faith by Prophecies and Miracles without Number.

Now the blessed God himself prepares his own People for this Heaven of Happiness, by giving them a full Conviction and Assurance of the Truth of all these divine Discoveries ; he impresses them upon their Heart with Power, and makes them attend to those divine Impressions. Every true Christian has learnt to say within himself, " This celestial Blessedness is no Dream, is no painted Vision, no gay Scene of flattering Fancy, nor is it a Matter of doubtful Dispute, or of uncertain Opinion. I am assured of it from the Words of Christ the Son of God, and from his blessed Followers, whom he authorized to teach me the Things of a future World." He that is taught of God beholds these Glories in the Light of a Divine Faith, which is to him the *Substance of Things hoped for, and the Evidence of Things not yet seen*, Heb. xi. 1.

2. God works up the Souls of his People to a Preparation for the heavenly State, by purifying them from every Defile-

fillement that might unfit them for the Blessedness of Heaven. The Removal of the *Guilt of Sin* by his pardoning Mercy I have mentioned before as necessary to our Entrance into the Heavenly State ; and we must walk through this World, this defiling World, with all holy Watchfulness, lest our Soul be blemished with new Pollutions, lest new Guilt come upon our Consciences, and the Thoughts of Appearance before God be terrible to us. That Soul is very much unfit for an Entrance into the Presence of a holy God, who is ever plunging itself into new Circumstances of Guilt, by a careless and unholy Conversation. To stand upon the Borders of Life, and the very Edge of Eternity, will be dreadful to those who have given themselves a Loose to criminal Pleasures, and indulged their irregular Appetites and Passions.

But 'tis not only a Conscience purged from the Guilt of Sin by the Blood of Christ, but a Soul washed also from the defiling Power and Taint of Sin by the sanctifying Spirit that is necessary to make us meet for the heavenly Inheritance. This is that Purification which I now chiefly intend, Matth. v. 8. *Blessed are the pure in Heart for they shall see God.* Nothing that defileth must enter into the City of God on high, nor *whosoever maketh a Lye or loveth it*, Rev. xxi. 27. No Injustice, no Falshood, no Guile or Deceit, can be admitted within those Gates : they must be *without Guile* both in their Heart and Tongue, if they will *stand before the Throne of God*, Rev. xiv. 5. Sincerity and Truth of Soul, with all the Beauties of an upright Heart and Character, are necessary to prepare an Inhabitant for that blessed State. There must be no Envy, no Wrath or Malice, no Revenge, nor any of the angry Principles that dwell in our Flesh and Blood, or that inflame and disturb the Mind, will be found in those Regions of Peace and Love. There must be no Pride or Ambition, no Self-Exaltation and Vanity that can dwell in Heaven, for it cast out the Angels of glorious Degree, when they would exalt themselves above their own Station. *Pride was the Condemnation of the Devil*, and it must not dwell in a human Heart that ever hopes for a heavenly Dwelling-place, 1 Tim. iii. 6. and Jude ver. 6. There must be no sensual and intemperate Creature there, no covetous Selfishness no irregular Passions, no Narrowness of Soul, no uncharitable and Party Spirit will ever be found in that Country of diffusive Love and Joy.

And

And since the best of Christians have had the Seeds of many of these Iniquities in their Hearts, and they have made a painful Complaint of these rising Corruptions of Nature upon many Occasions, these Iniquities must be mortified and slain by the Work of the Spirit of God within us, if ever we ourselves would live the Divine Life of Heaven, *Rom. viii. 13.* There is a great deal of this purifying Work to be done in the Souls of all of us, before we can be prepared for the heavenly World, and though we cannot arrive at Perfection here, yet we must be wrought up to a Temper in some measure fit to enter into that Blessedness : And God is training his People up for this Purpose all the Days of their Travels through this desert World. Happy Souls, who feel themselves more and more released from the Bonds of these Iniquities, Day by Day, and thereby feel within themselves the growing Evidences of a joyful Hope !

3. God does not only purify us from every Sin in order to prepare us for Heaven, but *he is ever loosening and weaning our Hearts from all those lawful Things in this Life, which are not to be enjoy'd in Heaven.* Our sensual Appetites, and our carnal Desires, so far as they are natural, though not sinful, must die before we can enter into eternal Life. *Flesh and Blood cannot inherit* that divine, incorruptible, and refined Happiness. Riches and Treasures of Gold and Silver which the *Rust can corrupt, and which Thieves can break through and steal*, are not provided for the heavenly State : They are all of the earthly kind, and too mean for the Relish of a heavenly Spirit. Although a Christian may possess many of these Things in the present Life, yet his Affections must be divested of them, and his Soul divided from them, if he would be a Saint indeed, and ever ready for the purer Blessings of Paradise. The Businesses, the Cares and the Concerns of this secular Life, are ready to drink up our Spirits too much while we are here ; we are too prone to mingle our very Souls with them, and thereby grow unfit for heavenly Felicities : And therefore 'tis that our Saviour has warned us, *Luke xxi. 34. Let not your Hearts be overcharged with the Cares of this World,* any more than with *Surfeiting and Drunkenness*, if you would be always ready for your Flight to a better State, and meet the Summons of your Lord to Paradise.

There are also many curious Speculations and delightful

Amusements which may lawfully entertain us while we are here ; there are Sports and Recreations which may divert the Flesh or the Mind in a lawful manner, whilst we dwell in Tabernacles of Flesh and Blood, and are encompassed with mortal Things : But the Soul that is wrought for Heaven must arise to an holy Indifference to all the Entertainments of Flesh and Sense, and Time, if it would put on the Appearance of an heavenly Inhabitant. Christians that would be ever ready for the Glories of a better World must be such in some measure as the Apostle describes, 1 Cor. vii. 29. *Ec.* They must *rejoice with such Moderation* in their dearest Comforts of Life *as though they rejoiced not*, they must *weep* and mourn for the Loss of them with such a divine Self-Government *as though they wept not*, they must *buy as though they possessed not*, they must *use this World as not abusing it* in any Instance, but must look upon the Fashions and the Scenes of it as vanishing Things, and have their Hearts *set on the Things that are above where Christ Jesus is at the Father's right Hand*, Colof. iii. 1, 2.

If you ask me, what Methods the blessed God uses in order to attain these Ends, and to purify and refine the Soul for Heaven, I answer, he sometimes does it by sharp Strokes of Affliction, making our Interests in the Creature bitter to us, that we may be wean'd from the Relish of them, and the Power of Divine Grace, must accompany all his weaning Providences, or the Work will not be done.

Sometimes again he weans the Soul from the lawful Things of this World, by permitting our earthly Enjoyments to plunge us into Difficulties, to seize the Heart with Anxieties, or to surround us with sore Temptations : Then, when we feel ourselves falling into Sin, and bruised or defiled thereby, we lose our former Gust of Pleasure in them ; and when we are recovered by Divine Grace, we are more effectually weaned from such kind of Temptations for the future ; but 'tis impossible in the Compass of a few Lines to describe the various Methods which the blessed God uses to wean the Spirit from all its earthly Attachments, and to work it up to a Meetness for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light. Blessed Souls, who are thus loosened and weaned from sensible Things, though it be done by painful Sufferings !

4. The great God not only weans our Hearts from those Things that are not to be enjoyed in Heaven, but he gives us a holy Appetite and Relish suited to the Provisions of the heavenly World, and raises our Desires and Tendencies of Soul toward them. By Nature our Minds are estranged from God, and from all that is divine and holy; we have no Desires after his Love, nor Delight in the Thoughts of dwelling with God: But when Divine Grace has effectually touched the Heart, it ever tends upwards to that World of Holiness and Peace. So the Needle, when 'tis touched by the Loadstone, ever points to the beloved Pole-star, and seems uneasy when it is diverted from it, nor will it rest till it return thither again.

Do the sweet Sensations of Divine Love make up a great Part of the heavenly Blessedness? The Soul is in some measure fitted for it, who can say with *David* in *Psal. iv. 6.* *Lord, lift thou up upon me the Light of thy Countenance, and it shall rejoice my Heart more than if Corn, and Wine, and Oil abounded, and all earthly Blessings were multiplied upon me; for in thy Love is the Life of my Soul, and thy Loving-kindness is better than Life, Psal. lxiii.*

Is the felicitating Presence of God to be enjoyed in the future World, and shall we see his Face there with unspeakable Delight? Then those Souls are prepar'd for Heaven, who can say with the Psalmist, *Psal. xlii. 2.* *When shall I come and appear before God? When shall I have finished my Travels through this Wilderness, that I may arrive at my Father's House? This one Thing have I desired, that I may dwell in the House of God for ever to behold the Beauty of the Lord there, Psal. xxvii. 4.* 'Tis enough for me that I shall behold thy Face in Righteousness, and I shall be satisfied when I awake out of the Dust with thy Likeness. With my Soul have I desired thee, O Lord, in the Night, in the Darkness of this desert World I have longed for the Light of thy Face, and with my Spirit within me I will seek thee early. Whom have I in Heaven but thee, neither is there any on Earth that I desire besides thee, *Psal. xvii. Isai. xxvi. Psal. lxxiii.* O when shall the Day come when there shall be no more Distance and Estrangement of my Heart from God, but I shall feel all my Powers for ever near him?

Is the sweet Society of Jesus to be enjoyed in the heavenly Region, then those are prepared for this Happiness who

who feel in themselves *a Desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better than the most pleasurable Scenes on Earth, Phil. i. 23. I am willing and rejoice in the Thought of it rather to be absent from the Body, and to be present with the Lord, 2 Cor. v. 8. I behold in the Light of Faith the dawning Glory of that Day when Jesus shall return from Heaven, when he shall revisit this wretched World, and put an End to these wretched Scenes of Vanity. Behold he cometh in the Clouds and every Eye shall see him. He comes into our World to them that look for him, not to be made a Sacrifice for Sin, but to compleat our Salvation. I long to behold him, and I love the Thought of his Appearance, Rev. i. Heb. ix. 2 Tim. iv. &c.*

Is there not only a Freedom from Pain and Sorrow among the Saints on high, but is there also an eternal Release from all the Bonds of Sin and Temptation? Then that Soul discovers a Degree of Preparation for it, who can say with an holy Groan and Grief of Heart, *O wretched Man that I am, who shall deliver me from this Body of Sin and Death? Rom. vii. In this Tabernacle we groan indeed being burdened, and are desirous rather to be cloathed upon with our House which is from Heaven, with our holy State of Immortality, 2 Cor. v. 4. That God who has wrought these divine Breathings in the Soul will one Day fulfil them all, and he is working up the Christian to a blessed Meetness for this Felicity by awakening these Wishes in the very Centre of the Heart. Happy Heart, which feels these holy Aspirations, these divine Breathings!*

5. The blessed God is pleased to work us up to a Preparation for the heavenly World *by forming the Temper of our Minds into a likeness to the Inhabitants of Heaven, i. e. to God himself, to Christ Jesus the Son of God, to Angels and Saints, to the Spirits of the just made perfect. From the Children of Polly and Sin we must be transformed into the Children of God, we must be created anew after his Image, and resemble our heavenly Father, that we may be capable of enjoying his Love, and rejoicing in his Presence. We must be conformable to the Image of his only begotten Son Christ Jesus, and walk and live as he did in this World, that we may be prepared to dwell with him in the World to come, Rom. viii. 29. 1 John iv. 17. We must have the same Temper and Spirit of Holiness wrought in*

us, that we may be Imitators of all the holy Ones that dwell in Heaven, and that we may be Followers of the Saints who have been Strangers and Travellers in this World in all former Ages.

How can we hope to have free Conversation with glorious Beings, which are so unlike to ourselves, as God, and Christ, and Angels, are unlike to the sinful Children of Men? How can we imagine ourselves to be fit Company for such pure and perfect Beings; beauteous, and shining in Holiness, while we are defiled with the Iniquities of our Natures, and ever falling into new Guilt and Pollution? Happy Souls, who can say thro' Grace, I have *walked in the Light as God is in the Light*, and I trust, O Father, I shall dwell for ever with thee there. I have been a Follower of the Lamb through the thorny and rugged Passages of this Wilderness, and I humbly hope I shall set with thee, O *Jesus*, upon a Throne, glorious and holy. I have been a Companion of them who have finished the Christian Race, who have fought the good Fight, and obtained the Victory, and I trust I shall have a Name and a Place amongst all you holy Ones who have fought and overcome. O for a Heart and Tongue furnished for such Appeals to all the blessed Inhabitants of Paradise, the Possessors of those Mansions on high!

6. The Grace of God works us up to a Preparation for Heaven *by carrying us thro' those Trials and Sufferings, those Labours and Conflicts here in this Life, which will not only make Heaven the sweeter to us, but will make it more honourable for God himself to bestow this Heaven upon us.*

When the Spirits of a Creature are almost worn out with the toilsome Labours of the Day, what an additional Sweetness does he find in Rest and Repose? What an inward Relish and Satisfaction to the Soul, that has been fatigued under a long and tedious War with Sins and Temptations, to be transported to such a Place where Sin cannot follow them, and Temptation can never reach them? How will it inhanche all the Felicities of the heavenly World when we enter into it, to feel ourselves released from all the Trials and Distresses and Sufferings which we have sustained in our Travels thitherwards? The Review of the Waves and the Storms wherein we had been tossed for a long Season, and had been almost shipwreck'd there, will make the

the peaceful Haven of Eternity, to which we shall arrive much more agreeable to every one of the Sufferers, 2 Cor. iv. 17. *Our light Afflictions, which are but for a Moment, are in this Way working for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory, and preparing us for the Possession of it.*

But it should be added also, that the Prize of Life, and the Crown of Glory, is much more honourably bestowed on those who have been long fighting, running, and labouring to obtain it. Heaven will appear as a condecant Reward of all the faithful Servants of God upon Earth, and a divine Recompence of their Labours and Sufferings, 2 Thes. i. 6 *As it is a righteous Thing with God to recompense Tribulation to them that trouble you, so to give to those who are troubled Rest and Salvation.* This is that equitable or condecant Fitness that God, as Governor of the World, has wisely appointed and made necessary before our Entrance into Heaven. Christ himself our Forerunner and the Captain of our Salvation, was made perfect thro' Sufferings, and was train'd up for his Throne on high by enduring the Contradiction of Sinners, and the Variety of Agonies which attended his Life and Death in this lower World, this Stage of Conflict and Sufferings. See Heb. ii. 10. and xii. 1.

Though we cannot pretend by our Labours in the Race to have merited the Prize, yet we must labour through the Race before we receive it. Our Conflicts cannot pretend to have deserved the Crown which is promised, but we must fight the Battles of the Lord before we obtain it. This was St. Paul's Encouragement and Hope, 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. *I have fought the good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the Righteous Judge will give me, and not to me only, but to all those who love his Appearance.* There is a great deal of divine Wisdom in this Appointment, that the Children of God may be counted in this Sense, worthy of his Kingdom for which they also suffer, 2 Thes. i. 5. and that the Relish of those Satisfaction may be doubled to all the Sufferers.

7. God yet further prepares and works up his People for Heaven by teaching them some of the Employments of the heavenly World, and initiating and inuring them to the Practice thereof. Is the Contemplation of the blessed God in his Nature and his various Perfections the Business of glorified Souls?

God

God teaches his Children, whom he is training up for Glory, to practise this holy Contemplation: He fixes their Thoughts upon the Wonders of his Nature and his Grace, his Works of Creation and Providence, the Blessings of his redeeming Love by his Son *Jesus*, and the Terrors of his Justice which shall be executed by the same Hand, while the Soul at the same Time can appeal to God with holy Delight, *My Meditation of thee shall be sweet indeed*, O may I dwell for ever in the midst of thy Light, and see all thy wondrous Glories diffused around me, and make my Joys everlasting!

Are we told that Heaven consists also in *beholding the Glory of Christ*, John xvii. 24. And how happily does God prepare his Saints for this Part of Heaven, by filling their Thoughts with the various Graces and Honours of *Jesus* the Saviour? And when they are in their lonely Retirements, they trace the Footsteps of their Beloved through all his Labours and Sorrows in this mortal State, even from his Cradle to his Cross; they follow him in their holy Meditations to his Agonies in the Garden, to his Anguish of Soul there; thro' all his Sufferings in Death, through the Grave his Bed of Darknes, and trace him on still to his glorious Resurrection, and to his Ascent to his Father's House, when a bright Cloud like a Chariot bore him up to Heaven with attending Angels: *This is my Beloved*, says the Soul, and *this is my Friend*, whom I shall see with Joy in the upper World: He is altogether lovely, and he demands my highest Love.

Is it part of the Happiness of Heaven to converse with the blessed God by holy Addresses of Acknowledgments and Praise, as it is described in Rev. iv. and v. and vii. They are before the Throne of God Day and Night, and serve him in his Temple, and join with holy Joy to pronounce that Divine Song, *Blessing and Honour, and Glory and Power, be to him that sitteth on the Throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever: Worthy art thou O Lord, to receive Glory and Honour, for thou hast created all Things for thy Pleasure: Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive Power, and Riches, and Strength, Glory and Blessing, for thou was slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy Blood out of every Kindred and Nation.* Now 'tis evident that those whose Hearts and Lips are joyfully fitted pronounce this holy Song, and to join in this Harmony, is fitted

fitted also for these blessed Employments of the heavenly State : And yet at the same time they abase themselves in the Dust of Humility, and with the living Creatures or Angels they fall down before the Throne, and with the Elders they cast down their Crowns at his Foot, they confess themselves the Sons of Earth and Dust, and would appear as nothing while God is all, *Rev. iv. 9, 10. and v. 8.*

Are all the Powers of glorified Nature in Heaven active in the unknown Services of God and *Christ* there ? So the Saints are train'd up for this Service and this Activity here on Earth, by Diligence and Delight in their less noble Employments, the inferior Labours and Duties that Providence demands of them here, whereby they are prepar'd for more glorious Employment on high ; for Heaven is no idle or unactive State.

Do some of the Satisfactions of the heavenly World arise from the *sweet Society of the Blessed above, their fervent Love to each other, their mutual Delight in holy Converse, the Joy that arises in the Heart of each upon a Survey of the Happiness of all the holy and blessed Inhabitants ? Does Benevolence and Goodness of every kind overflow in the heavenly World ?* 'Tis plain that God is training up his own Children for this Blessedness, by employing them in this manner while they are here below : He is in some Measure fitted for this Heaven, who can say, *the Saints are the Excellent of the Earth, in whom is all my Delight* : I love them from my Soul, because they love my God and my Saviour. I see the Image of the Father, and of *Jesus* his Son in them, and I cannot but love that Image wheresoever I behold it. I feel myself ready to rejoice when my Fellow Christians partake of Joy, and I long for that Temper of Mind when I shall delight myself in the Felicity of all my Fellow Saints in Perfection, and shall make their Heaven a Part of my own. But I proceed not here, because this would anticipate what I design hereafter.

8. God is pleased to work up his People to a Preparation for the heavenly State, by giving them a Pledge and Earnest of the Blessedness of Heaven, that is, by sending his own Spirit into their Hearts under this very Character, both as the Spring of a divine Life, and as the Evidence of our Hope, and sometimes bestowing upon them such *Foretastes of the heavenly World*, by the Operations of his holy Spirit, which

which are too joyful and glorious to be fully expressed in mortal Language ; but we shall attempt something of it in another Discourse.

I proceed now to seek what *Inferences* or edifying *Remarks* may be made upon our Meditations thus far.

Rem. 1. We learn from my Text *what are the brightest, the plainest, and the surest Evidences of our Interest in the heavenly Blessedness : are we train'd up to it, and prepar'd for it ?* Has the blessed God wrought up our Souls to any hopeful Degrees of this Preparation ? Has he in any Measure made us meet for this Inheritance of the Saints in Light ?

I grant the Scripture teaches us, that 'tis by a true and living Faith in our Lord *Jesus Christ*, that we obtain a Title to eternal Life, according to the Proposals of the Covenant of Grace in the Gospel ; but our Preparation for Heaven by a holy and heavenly Temper of Mind and Conduct of Life, is the fairest and most uncontested Evidence of the Truth and Life of our Faith, and such a Proof of it as will stand the Test both in Life and Death, in this World, and in the World to come. If we would manifest our Faith in *Christ* to be sincere and genuine and effectual for our Salvation, we must make it appear that we are growing up into the Image of *Christ* in all things, we must be formed after the Likeness of the Son of God, who is our great Example, and our Fore-runner into Heaven ; and where this Evidence is found the Soul cannot fail of Salvation. Wheresoever there is this Fitness for the Joys on high, God will assuredly bestow these Divine Pleasures. It is for such Souls that he has prepar'd a Heaven, and when he has prepar'd such Souls for the heavenly World, he will surely bring them to the Possession of it.

Of how great Moment and Importance is it then for each of us to examine ourselves with watchful Diligence and Sincerity, whether we are in any measure fitted for the Blessedness above : And to this End we may run over in our Enquiries all the former Steps of Preparation.

Let us enquire of our Souls then, am I so fully persuaded of this State of future Happiness, as to resolve, This shall be my Aim, this my everlasting Pursuit ? Have we seen this Blessedness in the various Representations of it in the Word of God, as the most amiable and desirable Thing, and have we set our Faces to travel thither with an holy Purpose

Purpose and Determination, through Grace, never to tire or grow weary till we arrive at the Enjoyment of it? Have we fixed our Hope and Expectation upon the blessed Promises in the Word, and are we by these Promises endeavouring daily to cleanse ourselves from all Defilements of Flesh and Spirit, and to perfect Holiness in the Fear of God? Do we obtain any Victories over our spiritual Enemies, and maintain our pious Conflicts against all the Oppositions which we meet with in our Way? Do we labour to suppress every rising Ferment of Envy, Pride, Wrath, Sensuality, and those corrupt Appetites and Passions which render us unfit for that holy and heavenly World? Are our Hearts daily more mortify'd to the Things of this World, the Enjoyments of Flesh and Sense, which are not to be found in Heaven? Are our Hearts more weaned from the sensual Satisfactions and intemperate Delights of the animal Life? Are we dead to the Temptations of Gold and Silver, the Grandeurs and the Gaieties, and Splendors of this present low Life of Flesh and Blood, which are no Part nor Portion of the heavenly Felicity? Do we view the tempting Things of this World with an holy Indifference, and possess and use them with Affections so calm and so cool, as becomes a Rank of Beings that have a nobler, a richer, and a more exalted Hope? Have we found the Labours and Burdens, the Sorrows and Afflictions of the present State, happy Instruments to prepare us for the Blessedness above, by curing all our vain and Carnal Desires? Are we in any measure Imitators of those who have gone before us thro' *Faith and Patience*, and are made Possessors of the promised Joy? Are we *Followers of God as dear Children*? Have we the Image of our heavenly Father created anew in us, and do we walk as our Lord *Jesus Christ* also walked, while he was in this Wilderness travelling to his Father's House? Are our earnest Desires towards this sort of Felicity excited and raised high? Have we a strong Tendency of Soul to the holy Enjoyments of the upper World? Do we sigh and groan after a compleat Freedom from Sin, and a Deliverance from every Temptation? Do we employ our selves with Pleasure in the Work and Business of Heaven, in the holy Contemplation of God, in a delightful Survey of the Person and Offices of his Son *Jesus*, his wondrous Condescension, and his amazing Com-

passion?

passion? Do we take pleasure in conversing with God our Father by holy Addresses of Praise and Thankfulness? Do we love all the Saints, and delight in their Society, and do we rejoice to spend our Time with them in heavenly Conversation, though they may be amongst the lower Ranks of Life here on Earth? And do we diffuse our Love thro' all who wear the Image of God, and take a pleasing Satisfaction of Soul in their Increase in Holiness, and rejoice in their Joys?

If God has thus fitted thee, O Christian, in this Manner for the Mansions of the happy World, then surely he has set thee apart for himself, he has begun eternal Life in thee, the Dawn of eternal Glory is risen upon thee, and he will bring thee into the compleat Noon of Blessedness, into the overflowing Light of divine Beatitudes. *Arise and shine, O Christian, for thy Life is come, the Glory of the Lord is risen upon thee*; thou hast no need to ascend into Heaven to search for thy Evidences among the Decrees of God, and to pry into the Rolls of Electing Grace; for if thou hast been transformed into an heavenly Temper, thy Name is surely written in the Lamb's Book of Life; Heaven is begun within thee, and God will fulfil his own Work.

Rem. 2. *What a solid Comfort is it to poor, mourning, troubled, afflicted Souls under all their Sorrows, their Frailties, their Temptations, and Infirmities here on Earth, that they have a clear Evidence of Heaven within them.* This is such a Peace as Jesus Christ left to his Disciples by Legacy, *John xiv. 27. Such as the World cannot give, and such as the World cannot take away.*

This is a Spring of constant and divine Consolation to those who seem to be worn out with old Age or Infirmities of Nature, and they complain they are fit for no Service in this World; but if they can feel in themselves this holy Fitness for the Enjoyments of Heaven, they have a rich and living Fountain of Pleasure in their own Breasts, ever springing, ever flowing, and such as will follow them with daily Supplies of Pleasure, if they are not wanting to themselves, thro' all this Wilderness, till they arrive at that Land where all the Rivers of Blessing meet and join in a full Stream, to make the Inhabitants for ever happy.

It may be, O Christian, thou art afraid that thou hast felt but little of this divine Preparation; thou see'st so many

Defects in thyself daily, so much Unlikeness to God, so much Working of Iniquity, such restless Efforts of the Body of Sin, so much Prevalence of Temptation, so much Coldness in Duty, such Deadness in Acts of Devotion, such frequent Returns of Guilt and Pain in a tender Conscience, and so many Enemies to struggle with every Step of thy Way to Heaven, that thou art greatly discouraged and afraid this divine Preparation is not wrought in thee. Enquire then yet further, Are all these melancholy Scenes both within and without, the Matter of thy sincere Grief and burden? Canst thou say in this Tabernacle, I groan, being burden'd with the Body of Sin, as well as with the Frailties and Pains of Nature? Canst thou say sincerely, that thy inmost Desires are towards God and his Glory in the present Life, and towards his Enjoyment in the Life to come? Dost thou maintain a constant Converse with Heaven as well as thou canst, tho' it be so much broken, and so often painfully interrupted? Hast thou a continual and settled Aversion and Hatred to Sin, and a holy Jealousy and Fear of its Defilements? Hast thou a restless Breathing of Soul after greater Likeness to God and greater Communion with him? Dost thou delight in spiritual and holy Conversation; and does thy Zeal for the Honour of God and his Son *Jesus*, carry thee forth to those Actions which are suitable to thy Station, for the Advancement of Religion in the World? Be assured then that God is training thee up for this heavenly State, and has in some measure prepared thee for it. God has begun in thee the Business and Blessedness of the upper World. In the midst of all thy Sorrows and Complaints here below, Peace be with thee and Joy in the Lord, for thy Salvation and thy Felicity shall be compleated.

Rem. 3. *How vain, and idle, and unreasonable are all the Hopes of Sinners that they shall ever arrive at Heaven without any Preparation for it here?* There is nothing divine and holy begun in them in this World, and yet they hope to be made happy in the World that is to come; there is nothing of true Grace wrought in their Hearts here, and yet they vainly expect to be made perfect in Pleasure and Glory hereafter.

Think with thyself, O carnal Creature, that Heaven will be a Burden to thee; the Powers, the Appetites, and Passions of thy sinful Nature, will not suffer thee to relish the Joys

Joys of the heavenly State. Dost thou imagine that a Worm or Serpent of the Earth, or a Swine which is ever tumbling in the Mire, can be entertained with the golden Ornaments and Splendors of a Palace? Or will the stupid Ass be delighted with the Harmony of a Harp or Viol? No more can a Soul of a carnal and sensual Taste, and which is ever seeking and groveling after earthly Gratifications, be pleased or gratify'd with the refin'd Enjoyments of the heavenly World. Thou must have a new Nature, new Appetites and Affections, ere thou canst partake of divine Joys, or relish them if thou wert placed in the midst of them. Holy Adoration of God, and humble Converse with him in Worship, Converse with the Saints about divine Things, perfect Purity and Devotion, with the Meditation of the Excellencies of Christ, and the Sight of him in his Ordinances, have never yet been the Object of thy Delight or Joy; nay, they have rather been thine Aversion; and shouldst thou have the Gates of Heaven open before thee, and see what Business the holy Souls there are employ'd in, thou wouldst find no Desire to such sort of Satisfaction; the Place and the Company would be thy Burden, if thou couldst be let at once into the midst of them.

Think again, O sinful Wretch, thy Carnality of Soul, thy supreme Love of sensual and brutal Joys, the secret Malice or Envy, the Pride and Impiety of thy Heart, have prepar'd thee for another sort of Company; thou art fitted for Hell by the very Temper of thy Spirit, for such are the Inhabitants of that miserable World, and in thy present State there can be no Admission for thee into Heaven. Thou hast treasur'd up Food for the Worm that never dies, for the eternal Anguish of Conscience; thou hast made thyself fit Fuel by Indulgence of thy sinful and rebellious Appetites and Passions, for the fiery Indignation of God; and every Day thou persistest in this State, thy Preparation for the dark Regions of Sin and Sorrow is encreased. But this leads me to the last Remark.

Rem. 4. *How dangerous a Thing it is for a Sinner to continue a Day longer in a State so unprepared for the heavenly World.* Dost thou not know, whilst we are Inhabitants in these Regions of Mortality, we are Borderers upon Death; and if we are unprepared for Heaven, we are Borderers upon Damnation and Hell? Our Life is but a Vapour,

and the next Puff may blow us away into the Regions of everlasting Darkness, Misery, and Despair.

Alas ! how much of this divine Preparation do the best of Saints stand in need of for an immediate Entrance into Heaven ? What Care do they take, how constant are their Labours, and how fervent their Prayers to increase in this divine Fitness, in these holy and heavenly Qualifications ! and dost thou vainly imagine to exchange Earth for Heaven at once, and to be received into the pure and holy Mansions of Paradise, without any Conformity to God or Christ, or the rest of the Inhabitants of that World ?

Objection. But some idle and slothful Creatures will be ready to object and say, If it be God who creates his People a new, according to his own Image, and fits them for Heaven ; if we must be wrought up by his Power and Grace for the Participation of this Glory, what can we do towards it ourselves ? Or why are we charged and exhorted to prepare ourselves for Heaven ? Since then it is God must do this Work, why may we not lie still, and wait till his Grace shall prepare us ?

I answer, No, by no means ; for God is wont to exert his Grace only while Creatures are in the use of his Appointments and fulfil their Duty. This Language therefore, and these Excuses, seem to be the mere Cavils of a carnal Mind, or the Voice of Sloth and Indolence. Those who have no Inclination to prepare themselves for the Joys of the heavenly State, may wait and expect divine Influences in vain, if they will never stir up themselves to practise what is in their own Power, and to attempt what the Gospel of Grace demands.

In almost all the Transactions of God with Men, it is the Way of his Wisdom to join our Diligence and his Grace together ; and there are many Scriptures that give us sufficient Notice of this. See how St. Paul argues with the *Philippians*, and stirs them up to Zeal and Activity in securing their own Salvation by the Hope of divine Assistances: *Phil. ii. 12, 13. Work out your own Salvation, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do.* So said David to his Son Solomon, when he appointed him to build the Temple of the Lord, *1 Chron. xxviii. 20. Be strong and of good Courage, and do it, for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee, and will not fail thee nor forsake thee, till thou hast finished*

*finishe*d all the *Work*. This was the Charge also that God gave to his People *Israel*, Lev. xx. 7. *Sanctify yourselves, and be ye holy, keep my Statutes ; I am the Lord who sanctifieth you.* So the Psalmist tells us, *Psal. iv. 3. The Lord hath set apart, or separated him who is godly for himself, and yet, 2 Cor. vi. 17. The Lord commands his People to separate themselves unto him, to come out from amongst the Sinners of this World ; and be you separate, saith the Lord, and I will receive you.* So in other Places of Scripture, divine Wisdom commands Sinners to fulfil their Duty, *Prov. i. 23. Turn ye at my Reproof :* And yet in the 80th Psalm, the Church prays, *Turn us, O Lord, and we shall be saved.* The Case is very much the same even in the Things that relate to this Life, wherein divine Assistance and Blessing are connected with our Diligence in Duty. *Solomon* tells us, *Prov. x. 4. The Hand of the Diligent maketh rich ; and yet ver. 22. It is the Blessing of the Lord that maketh rich also.* We can never expect the Favours of Heaven, unless we are zealous to obey the Commands of Heaven.

When the sinful Children of Men are found waiting on God in his own appointed Ordinances, then they are in the fairest way to receive divine Communications, and be transformed into Saints. If the blind Man had not obey'd the Voice of *Christ*, *John ix. 7.* and washed himself in the Pool of *Siloam*, he could not expect to have received his Eye-sight. If the Man with the withered Hand, *Matth. xii. 10, 13.* had not used his own Endeavours to stretch forth his Hand at the Command of *Christ*, I can hardly believe it would have been restored to its ancient Vigor and Usefulness. If the poor impotent Creature had not been waiting at the Side of the Pool in *Bethesda*, *John v.* he had not met with the blessed *Jesus*, nor been healed by his miraculous Power. You will say, perhaps, that our blessed Saviour could have visited him in his own House, could have directed his Journey towards his Habitation, or have sent for him into the Publick, and healed him there. No ; our Lord did not chuse either of these Ways : but while the Man was waiting at the Pool, where he had Encouragement to hope for a Cure, there the Lord found him, and healed him.

Let not any presuming Sinner therefore, who is sensible of his own Unfitness for Heaven, dare to continue in a careless

careless Indifference about so important a Concern : Let him not put off his own Conscience with this foolish Excuse, *It is God must do all in us and for us, and therefore I will do nothing myself.* Dost thou think, O Soul, that this will be a sufficient Answer to him that shall judge thee in the great and solemn Day ? May you not expect to hear the Judge reply terribly to such an Excuse, “ You sought after “ this Preparation for Heaven, and you must be plunged “ into Hell, for which your own Rebellion and Slothfulness “ hath prepar’d you.”

But perhaps you will *object* again, What can so feeble, so sinful a Creature as I am, do towards this divine Work ?

I answer, Canst thou not separate one Quarter of an Hour daily to think of thy dreadful Circumstances, and thine eternal Danger in a sinful and defiled State of Soul ? Think of the Uncertainty of Life, and how sudden thy Summons may be into the eternal and unchangeable State. Survey thyself in thy sinful Condition both of Heart and Life, and see how unfit thou art for the Company of all the holy ones above. Meditate on these thy perilous Circumstances, till thy Heart be deeply affected therewith ; fall down before God in humble Acknowledgment of thy former Guilt and Pollutions : Give up thyself to him with holy Solemnity, to have thy Heart turned away from every Sin, and strongly inclined to Holiness and Heaven. Commit thy Soul, guilty and defiled as it is, into the Hands of *Jesus* the Mediator ; entrust thy Case with him as an all-sufficient Saviour ; entreat that he would cleanse thee from all thy Guilt and Pollution, by the Blood of his Sacrifice, and the Grace of his Spirit ; that Blood of Atonement which has procured for Sinners Pardon and Peace with God, and those Operations of his Grace which may sanctify thy sinful Nature. Address thyself to the exalted Saviour for healing Influences from his Hand to cure all the Maladies of thy Soul, to form thee after his Image, and to make thee a Son of God. Pray with holy Importunity for this necessary and divine Blessing, wait on God in Secret and in Publick ; give him no Rest Night or Day till he has renewed thy Soul, and transformed thee into a new Creature, and given thee a Relish of the heavenly Enjoyments : Dwell at the Throne of Grace till thou feelest thy Heart drawn upward and heavenward, and watch against every thing that would defile thy Soul
anew,

anew, or make thee unfit to enter into the Company of the Blessed.

Permit me here to dwell a little upon those *Motives* that should awaken thee to bethink thyself ere it be too late, before the Grave has shut its Mouth upon thee, and thou art consign'd to the Place of eternal Misery. Awake, awake, O impenitent Sinners, who are as yet unprepared for the Business and Blessedness of the heavenly State ; awake and exert your Souls in warmest Reflections on Matters of infinite Importance.

(1.) Think with yourselves how much the Great God has done towards the Preparation of sinful Men for this Heaven ; think seriously of his long-suffering Goodness, and his sparing Mercy, which should have led you long ago to a melting Sense of your own Folly, and brought you back unto him by humble Repentance. For what Reason were his Patience and his Long-suffering exercised towards you, if not for this very Purpose ? *Rom. ii. 4.* Think of the Blessings of Nature with which he has surrounded you, and the Comforts of this Life wherewith he has furnished you, in order to allure your Thoughts towards him, who is the Spring of all Goodness ; and to raise your Desires towards him : 'Tis he invites you, who will be the everlasting Portion and Happiness of his People, and in whose Favour consists Life and Felicity ; and dare not any longer neglect your Preparation for this Happiness, which consists in the Enjoyment of God, lest you should be cut off before you are prepared.

(2.) Consider again what *Jesus*, the Son of God has done and suffer'd, and consider what he is yet doing towards the Preparation of Souls for Heaven : He came down to our World to undertake the glorious and dreadful Work of the Redemption of Sinners from the Curse of the Law and the Terrors of Hell, and to procure a Heaven for every rebellious Creature that would return to God his Father. Think of the Agonies of his Death with which he purchased Mansions of Glory for those that receive his Grace in his own appointed Methods, those that are willing to have their Hearts and Minds formed into a suitable Frame to receive this Felicity. Remember that he is risen from the Dead, he is ascended to prepare a Place in Glory for those that are willing to follow him thro' the Paths of Holiness.

Hearken to the many kind Invitations and Allurements of his Gospel, which calls to the worst of Sinners to return and live, and intreats and exhorts those who are in the Ends of the Earth, and upon the Borders of Hell, *to look unto him that they may be saved*, Isa. xlv. 22. Take heed that you suffer not these Seasons of his inviting Love to slide away and vanish unimproved; take heed how you rebel against the Language of the Grace of his Gospel, and thereby prepare yourselves for double and everlasting Destruction.

(3.) Think again, What blessed Assistances he has proposed to those who are desirous to be trained up for Heaven; how many Thousand Souls, as carnal, as sensual, and as criminal as yours are, have been recovered by the Word of his Gospel, and the Influences of his Spirit to a new Nature and Life of Holiness? How many are there who from Children of Wrath, have become the Sons and Daughters of the Most High God, Heirs of this Blessedness, and prepared for the Enjoyment of it? O take heed that you resist not this Grace, nor rebel against the kind and sacred Motions of the blessed Spirit within you, when his very Office and Business is to change your sinful Natures, and to prepare you for the Regions of eternal Holiness and Peace.

(4.) Think yet further what Advantages you have had from the Weekly Ministrations of the Word of Grace, from reading the Book of God in your own Language, and from the pious Education many of you have enjoyed in the Families from whence you sprung. Think what awakening Hints you have received by the inward Conviction of your own Consciences, and by the Christian Friends you may have conversed with: Have you not been told plainly enough by the Voice of Conscience that you are now utterly unprepar'd for Heaven? Have not publick and private Admonitions given you sufficient Warning of the Danger of your present State? and after all this will you proceed in your own sinful Course till you arrive at the very Gates of Hell and Destruction, till you have prepared yourselves, and made your Souls ripe for the Vengeance of God, and are plunged into it by Death without Remedy or Relief?

(5.) Consider how dreadful will your State be if Death meet you in all your Guilt and Defilements, unwashed, unpardon'd, and un sanctify'd, without any Garment of Righteousness,

teousness, without any Robe of Salvation. What a terrible Sentence is that which Death will pronounce upon every such Sinner the Moment that he strikes their Heart? Hear it, and tremble, O miserable Creature, hear the formidable and eternal Sentence, *Let him that is unholy, be unholy still: Let him that is unprepar'd for Heaven go down to the Regions of Death and Hell, for which his Iniquities have best prepar'd him.*

(6.) Think with yourselves, if you have any thing of Importance to do in this World, or have any momentous Scene of Life to pass through, how diligent are you in Preparation for it. If you are but to visit the Court of a Prince, or go to make your Addresses to any great Man of Honour and Power, or to be admitted into any numerous Society of a superior Character, how diligently do you endeavour to furnish yourselves with such Knowledge of the common Ceremonies of Life, and such Ornaments about your Body as may render you acceptable amongst those whom you are going to converse with: And does not an Entrance into the Court of Heaven, into the Presence of a God of Holiness, and into the Society of pure and blessed Spirits, require some Sollicitude and Care about those Ornaments and Qualifications which are necessary for so solemn and glorious an Appearance? If you are designing in this Life to commence any Trade or Business for your Employment and your Support, you are willing to serve an Apprenticeship of seven Years in order to a Preparation for the Exercise of this publick Business; and can you not afford one Day in a Week to learn the Business of Heaven, and to prepare for the Blessedness of it?

And let Parents also consider with themselves what Pains they have taken that their Children may be fit for the Trades and Employments of Life to which they design them, and then let each enquire of their own Consciences, Have I ever done so much to train up my Son for the heavenly World, to fit him for the Appearance before God, and Saints and Angels, and for all the unknown Services of that Celestial Country?

(7.) Go on yet further, O impenitent Sinners, and consider with yourselves what a Blessedness it is to be prepar'd for Heaven; for then you are prepared for Death, and at once you take away all the Terrors of it. O what an unspeakable

speakeable Happiness is it to pass through this World daily without the Fear of dying ? What is it that makes Life so bitter to Multitudes of Souls, and every Malady or Accident so frightful to them, but the perpetual Terrors of Death ? Think what a divine Satisfaction it is to walk up and down in this desert Land, ready prepared for an Entrance into the Land of Promise, the Inheritance of the Saints in Light : Think of the solid Joy and inward Consolation of those Souls who feel in themselves an habitual Readiness for a Departure hence, and who are wrought up by Divine Grace to a Preparation for the Business and the Joys above. Think of the Victory over Death, which is obtained by such a Readiness for Heaven, and how glorious a thing it is to meet that last Enemy the King of Terrors, and encounter him without Fear, and to triumph over him with Divine Language, *O Death, where is thy Sting ?* How joyful a Scene would it be to take Leave of all our Friends in this Land of Mortality, with an assured Hope that we are entering into a happier Climate and a better Country, ready prepar'd for all the more glorious Scenes that shall meet us in the invisible World ?

'Tis an amazing thing to me how the Children of Men, who are dying daily off from this Stage of Life, who must all shortly die, and enter into a World of eternal Futurity, should be no more concerned about a Preparation for their Departure hence : That they should be so stupidly thoughtless of a World to come, while they are on the very Borders of it, and eternal Joy or eternal Sorrow depends upon this one Question, *Am I prepar'd for Heaven or not ?* O those two awful Regions of the unseen World ; where the Love of God shines with its brightest Glories, or where the Vengeance of God is discovered in all its Anguish and Horror ! One of these will be the certain and eternal Dwelling-place of the Souls that are prepar'd for them, and there must they pass their long Immortality, either in Joy, or in Sorrow, without a Change ; and yet the foolish and besotted Tribes of Mankind seem to have abandoned all Thought and Concern about them. A dangerous Lethargy, or Distraction !

What shall we do to cure Sinners of this Madness ? Shall I try to rouse these indolent unthinking Wretches out of their dangerous and mortal Slumbers with the loudest Voice of Thunder and Divine Terror ? But the Lethargy of Sin

is Proof against all these Terrors and Thunders. Shall I call for a Fountain of Tears into my Eyes, and weep over them with the tenderest Sympathy and Compassion? But they feel not any Meltings of Pity for themselves, nor are their Hearts to be softened by all our Tears and Wailings. Shall I beseech them in the Name of *Christ* by the Bowels of his dying Love, and the Blood and Anguish of his Sufferings for our Salvation? But even these divine and astonishing Instances of Tenderneſs and Mercy make no Impreſſion on their Souls. While *Satan* holds them in his Chains, they are sleeping the Sleep of Death. O for a Word of Sovereign and Almighty Grace to reach the Centre of their Spirits! To shake all the Powers of their Nature! To awaken them to behold their eternal Interest! and to prepare for heavenly Felicity. Awake, O Sleepers, ere the Angel of Death seize you, and the Grave shut its Mouth upon you; then all your Seasons and Hopes of Mercy are cut off for ever, and you will awake hopeless Immortals.

I shall conclude this Discourse with one *Word of Exhortation* to those who are in any measure wrought up to a Preparation for the heavenly Blessedness. O happy Creatures! whatsoever Pains you have taken, whatever Conflicts you have endured in the Matter of your own Salvation, yet let God and his Grace have all the Honour of this Work. It is to God you owe your Sacrifices of Praise. *He that hath wrought you up for this Felicity is God.* It was he who awaken'd you first, and set you a thinking of your most important Concerns: It was he that led you first into the Way of Salvation by *Jesus Christ* his Son, and hath thus far crowned your Labours and your Prayers with Success and Blessing. Every Stumbling-block in your Way might have thrown you down to Perdition: Every Temptation might have turned you back from this glorious Pursuit: Every Enemy of your Souls might have discouraged or overcome you, if God and his Grace had not been engaged on your Side.

'Tis he hath upheld you when you were falling, he hath taken you by the Hand and led you right onward when you were wandering, and he hath supported you by his Divine Cordials of Promise when you were fainting. It is God who hath enabled you to maintain your Conflict with all the mighty Obstacles of your Faith and Hope; it is his
Grace

Grace hath renewed your Nature, hath weaned you from this vain flattering World, and given you a sacred Relish of Divine Blessedness. It is he who hath formed you again after his own Image, and hath trained you up, and made you meet for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light. Call up all your Powers to praise his Goodness, and say, "*Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me, Bless his holy Name: Bless the Lord for ever, and forget not all his Benefits. It is God who hath called me out of Darknes into his marvelous Light, and given me to see the Things that belong to my everlasting Peace. It is God who washed away my Iniquities in the Blood of his own Son, and hath renewed me unto Holiness by his blessed Spirit. It is God who hath taken me out of the Family of Sin and Satan, and given me a Place among his Children; who hath begun to prepare me for the Joys and Blessings of Heaven, and in his own Time he will fulfil all my Hopes, and compleat my Felicity.*" Walk before him with all holy Care and Watchfulness, and *take heed that you lose not the Things which you have wrought, nor the Things which God has wrought in you, but that persevering to the End you may receive the full Reward, and obtain the Crown of everlasting Life. Amen.*



DISCOURSE IX.

No Pain among the Blessed.

REV. XXI. 4.

Neither shall there be any more Pain.

THERE have been some Divines in ancient Times, as well as in our present Age, who suppose this Prophecy relates to some glorious and happy Event here on Earth, wherein the Saints and faithful Followers of *Christ* shall be deliver'd from the Bondage and Miseries to which they have been

been exposed in all former Ages, and shall enjoy the Blessing which these Words promise. Among these Writers some have placed this happy State before the Resurrection of the Body; others make it to belong to that *first Resurrection* which is spoken of in *Rev. xx. 6*. But let this Prophecy have a particular Aspect upon what *earthly* Period soever, yet all must grant it is certainly true concerning the *heavenly State*; from whose Felicities, taken in the *literal* Sense, these *figurative* Expressions are derived to foretell the Happiness of any Period of the Church in this World; and in this Sense, as *Part of our Happiness in Heaven*, I shall understand the Words here, and propose them as the Foundation for my present Discourse.

Among the many Things that make this Life uncomfortable, and render Mankind unhappy here below, this is one that has a large Influence, *viz.* that *in this mortal State, we are all liable to Pain*, from which we shall be perfectly delivered in the Life to come. The *Greek* Word which is here translated *Pain*, signifies also *Toil* and *Fatigue* and excessive Labour of the Body, as well as *Anguish* and *Vexation* of the Spirit: But since in the two other Places of the New Testament where it is used, the Word most properly signifies the *Pain of the Body*, I presume to understand it chiefly in this Sense also in my Text.

I need not spend Time in explaining *what Pain is* to Persons who dwell in Flesh and Blood: There is not one of you in this Assembly but is better acquainted with the Nature of it by the Sense of *Feeling*, than it is possible for the wisest Philosopher to inform you by all his learned Language. Yet that I may proceed regularly, I would just give you this short Description of it. *Pain is an uneasy Perception of the Soul, occasioned by some Indisposition of the Body to which it is united*; whether this arise from some Disorder or Malady in the Flesh itself, or from some Injury received from without by Wounds, Bruises, or any Thing of the like kind. Now this Sort of uneasy Sensations is not to be found or feared in Heaven.

In order to make our present Meditations on this Part of the *Blessedness of Heaven* useful and joyful to us while we are here on Earth, let us enquire,

- I. What are the Evils or grand Inconveniences that generally

nerally flow from the Pains we suffer here ; and as we go we shall survey the Satisfaction which arise by our Freedom from them all in Heaven.

II. What just and convincing Proofs may be given that there are no such uneasy Sensations to be felt in Heaven, or to be feared after this Life.

III. What are the chief Reasons or Designs of the Blessed God in sending Pain on his Creatures in this World ; and at the same Time I shall shew that Pain is banished from the heavenly State, because God has no such Designs remaining to be accomplished in that World.

IV. What Lessons we may learn from the painful Discipline which we feel while we are here, in order to shew there is no need of such Discipline to teach us those Lessons in Heaven, let us address ourselves to make these four Inquiries in their Order.

SECTION I.

First. *What are the Evils which flow from Pain, and usually attend it in this Life ;* and all along as we go we shall take a short View of the heavenly State, where we shall be released from all these Evils and Inconveniences.

1. *Pain has a natural Tendency to make the Mind sorrowful as well as the Body uneasy.* Our Souls are so nearly united to Flesh and Blood, that it is not possible for the Mind to possess perfect Happiness and Ease, while the Body is exposed to so many Occasions of Pain. 'Tis granted, that natural Courage and Strength of Heart may prevail in some Persons to bear up their Spirits under long and intense Pains of the Flesh, yet they really take away so much of the Ease and Pleasure of Life, while any of us lie under the acute Sensations of them. Pain will make us confess that we are Flesh and Blood, and force us sometimes to cry out and groan. Even a *Stoick* in spite of all the Pride of his Philosophy, will sometimes be forced, by a Sigh or Groan, to confess himself a Man. What are the greatest Part of the Groans and Outcries that are heard all round this our Globe of Earth but the Effects of Pain, either felt or fear'd ?

But in *Heaven*, where there is no Pain, there shall be no sighing or groaning, nor any more crying, as my Text expresses. There shall be nothing to make the Flesh or the

Spirit

Spirit uneasy, and to break the eternal Thread of Peace and Pleasure that runs through the whole Duration of the Saints: Not one painful moment to interrupt the everlasting Felicity of that State. When we have done with Earth and Mortality, we have done also with Sickness and Anguish of Nature, and with all Sorrow and Vexation for ever. There are no Groans in the heavenly World to break in upon the Harmony of the Harps and the Songs of the Blessed; no Sighs, no Outcries, no Anguish there to disturb the Musick and the Joy of the Inhabitants. And though the Soul shall be united to the Body new-raised from the Dead, to dwell for ever in Union, yet that new-raised Body shall have neither any Springs of Pain in it, nor be capable of giving Anguish or Uneasiness to the indwelling Spirit for ever.

2. Another Evil which attends on Pain is this, that it *so indisposes our Nature as often to unfit us for the Business and Duties of the present State.* With how much Coldness and Indifferency do we go about our daily Work, and perform it too with many Interruptions, when Nature is burdened with continual Pain, and the vital Springs of Action are overborn with perpetual Uneasiness? What a Listlessness do we find to many of the Duties of Religion at such a Season, unless it be to run more frequently to the Throne of God, and pour out our Groanings and our Complaints there? Groanings and Cries are the Language of Nature, and the Children of God address themselves in this Language to their heavenly Father: Blessed be the Name of our gracious God, who hears every secret Sigh, who is acquainted with the Sense of every Groan, while we mourn before him, and make our Complaints to him, that we cannot worship him, nor work for him as we would do, because of the Anguish and Maladies of Nature.

And what an Indisposition and Backwardness do we feel in ourselves to fulfil many of the Duties towards our Fellow-Creatures while we ourselves are under present Smart and Anguish? Pain will so sensibly affect *Self* as to draw off all our Thoughts thither, and centre them there, that we cannot so much employ our Cares and our active Powers for the Benefit of our Neighbours: It abates our Concern for our Friends, and while it awakens the Spirit within us into keen Sensations, it takes away the Activity of the
Man

Man that feels it from almost all the Services of human Life. When human Nature bears so much it can act but little.

But what a blessed State will that be when we shall never feel this Indisposition to Duties, either human or divine, through any Uneasiness of the Body? When we shall never more be subject to any of these painful Impediments, but for ever cast off all those Clogs and Burdens which fetter the active Powers of the Soul? Then we shall be joyfully employed in such unknown and glorious Services to God our *Father*, and to the Blessed *Jesus*, as require much superior Capacities to what we here possess, and shall find no Weakness, no Weariness, no Pain throughout all the Years of our Immortality, *Rev. vii. 15.* None of the Blessed above are at rest or idle, either *Day or Night*, but they serve him in his Temple, and never cease, and *iv. 8.* No Faintness, no Languors are known there. The *Inhabitants of that Land*, shall not say, *I am sick*: Everlasting Vigour, Cheerfulness and Ease shall render every blessed Soul for ever zealous and active in Obedience, as the Angels are in Heaven.

3. Pain unfits us for the Enjoyments of Life, as well as for the Labours and Duties of it. It takes away all the pleasing Satisfaction which might attend our Circumstances, and renders the Objects of them insipid and unrelishing. What Pleasure can a rich Man take in all the Affluence of earthly Blessings around him, while some painful Distemper holds him upon the Rack, and distresses him with the Torture? How little Delight can he find in Meats or in Drinks which are prepared for Luxury, when sharp Pain calls all his Attention to the diseased Part? What Joy can he find in magnificent Buildings, in gay and shining Furniture, in elegant Gardens, or in all the glittering Treasures of the Indies, when the Gout torments his Hands and his Feet, or the Rheumatism afflicts his Limbs with intense Anguish? If Pain attacks any Part of the Body, and rises to a high Degree, the Luxuries of Life grow tasteless, and Life itself is imbittered to us: Or when Pains less acute are prolonged through Weeks and Months and perhaps stick in our Flesh all the Night as well as in the Day; how vain and feeble are all the Efforts of the bright and gay Things around us to raise the Soul into Cheerfulness? Therefore *Solomon* calls

old Age the Tears wherein there is no Pleasure, Ecclef. xii. 1. Because so many Aches and Ails in that Season pursue us in a continual Succession ; so many Infirmities and painful Hours attend us usually in that Stage of Life, even in the best Situation that Mortality can boast of, as cuts off and destroys all our Pleasures.

But O what a wondrous, what a joyful Change shall that be, when the Soul is commanded to forsake this Flesh and Blood, when it rises as on the Wings of Angels to the heavenly World, and leaves every Pain behind it, together with the Body in the Arms of Death ? and what a more illustrious and delightful Change shall we meet in the great-rising Day, when our Bodies shall start up out of the Dust with vigorous Immortality, and without any Spring or Seat of Pain ? All the unknown Enjoyments with which Heaven is furnished, shall be taken in by the enlarged Powers of the Soul with intense Pleasure, and not a Moment's Pain shall ever interrupt them.

4. Another Inconvenience and Evil which belongs to Pain is, that *it makes Time and Life itself appear tedious and tiresome, and adds a new Burden to all other Grievances.* Many Evidences of this Truth are scattered throughout all Nature, and on all Sides of this Globe. There is not one Age of Mankind but can furnish us with Millions of Instances. In what melancholly Language does *Job* discover his Sensations of the tiresome Nature of Pain ? *I am made to possess Months of Vanity, and wearisome Nights are appointed to me : When I lie down I say, when shall I rise and the Night be gone ? And I am full of tossing to and fro unto the Dawning of the Day,* Job vii. 3. When Pain takes hold of our Flesh it seems to stretch the Measures of Time to a tedious Length : We cry out as *Moses* expresses it, Deut. xxviii. 67. *In the Morning we say, would to God it were Evening ; and at the Return of the Evening we say again, would to God it were Morning.*

Long are those Hours indeed, whether of Day-light or Darknefs, wherein there is no Relief or Intermiſſion of acute Pain. How tiresome a Thing is it to count the Clock at Midnight in long Successions, and to wait every Hour for the distant Approach of Morning, while our Eyes are unable to close themselves in Slumber, and our Anguish admits not the common Refuge of Sleep. There are Multitudes among the Race of Mortals who have known these

Truths by fore Experience. Blessed be God that we do not always feel them !

But when we turn our Thoughts to the heavenly World, where there is no Pain, there we shall find no weary Hours, no tedious Days, though Eternity with all its unmeasurable Lengths of Duration lies before us. What a dismal Tho't is eternal Pain ? The very Mention of it makes Nature shudder and stand aghast ; But Futurity with all its endless Years, in a Land of Peace and Pleasure gives the Soul the most delightful Prospect, for there is no Shadow of Uneasiness in that State to render our Abode there tiresome, or to think the Ages of it long.

5. Another Evil that belongs to Pain is, that *it has an unhappy Tendency to ruffle the Passions, and to render us fretful and peevish within ourselves, as well as towards those who are round about us.* Even the kindest and the tenderest Hand that ministers to our Relief, can hardly secure itself from the peevish Quarrels of a Man in extream Pain.

Not that we are to suppose that this peevish Humour, this Fretfulness of Spirit are thereby made innocent and perfectly excused : No, by no Means ; but it must be acknowledged still that Continuance in Pain is too ready to work up the Spirit into frequent Disquietude and Eagerness : We are tempted to fret at every Thing, we quarrel with every Thing, we grow impatient under every Delay, angry with our best Friends, sharp and sudden in our Resentments, with wrathful Speeches breaking out of our Lips.

This peevish Humour in a Day of Pain is so common a Fault, that I fear 'tis too much excused and indulged. Let me rather say with myself, "My God is now putting me to the Trial what sort of Christian I am, and how much I have learnt of Self-Government, and through his Grace I will subdue my uneasy Passions, though I cannot relieve my Pain." O 'tis a noble Point of Honour gained in a sick Chamber, or on a Bed of Anguish, to lie press'd with extream Pain, and yet maintain a Serenity and Calmness of Soul ; to be all Meekness and Gentleness and Patience among our Friends or Attendants, under the sharp Twinges of it ; to utter no rude or angry Language, and to take every Thing kindly that they say or do, and *become like a weaned Child.* But such a Character is not found in every House.

A holy Soul, through the Severity of Pain, may sometimes in such an Hour be too much ruffled by violent and sudden Fits of Impatience. This proceeded to such a Degree even in that good Man *Job*, under his various Calamities and the fore Boils upon his Flesh, that made him *curse the Day wherein he was born*, and cry out in the Anguish of his Spirit, *my Soul chuseth Strangling and Death rather than Life*, Job iii. and vii. 15. and there have been several Instances of those who, having not the Fear of God before their Eyes, with hasty Violence and murderous Hands have put an End to their own Lives, thro' their wild and sinful Impatience of constant Pain.

But these Trials are forever finished when this Life expires: Then all our Pains are ended for ever if we are found among the Children of God. There is not, nor can be any Temptation in Heaven, to Fretfulness or Disquietude of Mind: All the peevish Passions are dropp'd into the Grave, together with the Body of Flesh; and those evil Humours which were the Sources of Smart and Anguish here on Earth have no Place in the new-raised Body: Those irregular Juices of animal Nature which tormented the Nerves, and excited Pain in the Flesh, and which at the same Time provoked Choler and irritated the Spirit, are never found in the heavenly Mansions. There is nothing but Peace and Pleasure, Joy and Love, Goodness and Benevolence, Ease and Satisfaction diffused through all the Regions on high: There are no inward Springs of Uneasiness to ruffle the Mind, none of those fretful Ferments which were won't to kindle in the mortal Body, and explode themselves with Fire and Thunder upon every supposed Offence, or even sometimes without Provocation. O happy State and blessed Mansions of the Saints, when this Body of Sin shall be destroyed, and all the restless Atoms that disquieted the Flesh and provoked the Spirit to Impatience, shall be buried in the Dust of Death, and never, never rise again!

6. Pain carries a Temptation with it, sometimes to repine and murmur at the Providence of God. Not Fellow-Creatures alone, but even our sovereign Creator comes within the Reach of the peevish Humours, which are alarmed and roused by sharp or continual Pain. *Jonah* the Prophet, when he felt the sultry Heat of the Sun smite fiercely upon him, and the Gourd which gave him a friendly Shadow was withered

away, he told God himself in a Passion, that *he did well to be angry, even unto Death, Jonah iv. 9.* And even the Man of Uz, the Pattern of Patience, was sometimes transported with the Smart and Maladies that were upon him, so that he complained *against* God as well as complained *to* him, and used some very unbecoming Expressions toward his Maker. When we are under the smarting Rebukes of Providence, we are ready to compare ourselves with others who are in Peace, and then the envious and the murmuring Humour breaks out into rebellious Language, *Why am I thus afflicted more than others? Why hast thou set me as a Mark for thine Arrows? Why dost thou not let loose thy Hand and cut me off from the Earth?*

But in Heaven there is a glorious Reverse of all such unhappy Scenes: There is no Pain nor any Temptation to murmur at the Dealings of the Almighty: There is nothing that can incline us to think hardly of God: The Days of Chastisement are for ever ended, and painful Discipline shall be used no more. We shall live for ever in the Embraces of the Love of God, and he shall be the Object of our everlasting Praise. Perfect Felicity without the Interruption of one uneasy Thought, for ever forbids the Inhabitants of that World to repine at their Situation under the eternal Smiles of that blessed Being that made them.

7. To add no more, *Pain and Anguish of the Flesh have sometimes prevail'd so far as to distract the Mind as well as destroy the Body.* It has over-powered all the reasoning Faculties of Man, it has destroyed natural Life, and brought it down to the Grave: The Senses have been confounded, and the Understanding overwhelm'd with severe and rack-ing Pain, especially where there hath been an impatient Temper to contest with them. Extreme Smart of the Flesh distresses feeble Nature, and turns the whole Frame of it upside down in wild Confusion: It has actually worn out this Animal Frame, and stopped all the Springs of vital Motion. The Gout and the Stone have brought Death upon the Patient in this Manner; and a dreadful Manner of dying it is, to have Breath, and Life and Nature quite oppress'd and destroy'd with intense and painful Sensations.

But when we survey the Mansions of the heavenly World, we shall find none of these Evils there: No Danger of any such Events as these; for there is no Pain, no Sorrow, no
Crying,

Crying, no Death nor Destruction there. The Mind shall be for ever clear and serene in the Ease and Happiness of the separate State : And when the Body shall be raised again, that glorified Body, as was intimated a little before, shall have none of the Seeds of Distemper in it, no Ferments that can rack the Nerves, or create Anguish ; no Fever, or Gout, or Stone, was ever known in that Country, no Head-ach or Heart-ach have ascended thither.

That Body also shall be capable of no outward Wounds nor Bruises, for it is raised only for Happiness, and leaves all the Causes of Pain behind it. It is a Body made for Immortality and Pleasure ; there the sickly Christian is delivered from all the Maladies of the Flesh and the Twinges of acute Pain which made him groan here on Earth, Night and Day. There the Martyrs of the Religion of *Jesus*, and all the holy Confessors are free from their cruel Tormentors, those surly Executioners of *Heathen* Fury, or *Antichristian* Wrath : They are forever released from Racks, and Wheels, and Fires, and every Engine of Torture and Smart. Immortal Ease and unfading Health and Chearfulness run through their eternal State, and all the Powers of the Man are compos'd for the most regular Exercises of Devotion and divine Joy.

Thus I have endeavour'd briefly to set the different States of Heaven and Earth before you under this distinguishing Character, that *all the tempting, the distressing and mischievous Attendants and Consequences of Pain*, to which we are expos'd in our mortal Life, are for ever banish'd from the Heavenly World.

SECTION II.

The second general Inquiry was this, *What just and convincing Arguments or Proofs can be given, that there are no Pains or uneasy Sensations to be felt by the Saints in a future State, nor to be fear'd after this Life.*

My Answers to this Question shall be very few ; because I think the thing must be sufficiently evident to those who believe the New Testament, and have liberty to read it.

1st Argument. *God has assured us so in his Word, that there is no Pain for holy Souls to endure in the World to come ?* My Text may be esteem'd a sufficient Proof of it ; for whatsoever particular Event or Period of the Church on Earth this Prophecy may refer to, yet the Description is borrow'd

from the Blessedness of Heaven ; and if there shall be any such State on Earth, much more will it be so in the heavenly World, whereof that Period on Earth is but a Shadow and Emblem. We are expressly told, *Rev. xiv. 8.* in order to encourage the persecuted Saints and Martyrs, *Blessed are the Dead who die in the Lord from henceforth, for they rest from their Labours [or Pains] and their Works follow them ; i. e.* in a way of gracious Recompence.

It is granted indeed by the *Papists* themselves, that in Heaven there is no Pain ; yet they suppose there are many and grievous Pains for the Soul to undergo in a Place call'd *Purgatory*, after the Death of the Body, before it arrives at Heaven.

But give me leave to ask, Does not *St. Paul* express himself with Confidence concerning himself and his Fellow-Christians---that they shall be present with the Lord when they are absent from the Body, *2 Cor. v. 8* ? Surely the State wherein *Christ* our Lord dwells after all his Sufferings and Agonies, is a State of everlasting Ease without Suffering ; and shall not his Followers dwell with him ? Do we not read in the Parable of our Saviour, *Luke xvi. 22.* that *Lazarus* was no sooner dead, but his Soul was carried by Angels into the Bosom of Abraham, or Paradise ? Every holy Soul wherein the Work of Grace is begun, and Sin hath received its mortal Wound, is perfectly sanctify'd when it is released from this Body ? and it puts off the Body of Sin and the Body of Flesh together, for nothing that defileth must enter into Paradise, or the heavenly State.

The Word of God has appointed but two States, (*viz.*) *Heaven* and *Hell*, for the Reception of all Mankind when they depart from this World : And how vain a Thing must it be for Men to invent a third State, and make a *Purgatory* of it ? This is a Building erected by the Church of *Rome* between Heaven and Hell, and prepared by their wild Imagination for Souls of imperfect Virtue, to be tormented there with Pains equal to those of Hell, but of shorter Duration. This State of fiery Purgation, and extream Anguish, is devised by that Mother of Lies, partly under a Pretence of completing the Penances and Satisfactions for the Sins of Men committed in this Life, and partly also to purify and refine their Souls from all the remaining Dregs of Sin, and to fill up their Virtues to Perfection, that they may be
fit

for the immediate Presence of God. But does not the Scripture sufficiently inform us, that the Atonement or Satisfaction of *Christ* for Sin is full and compleat in itself, and needs none of our Additions in this World or another? Does not the Apostle *John* tell us, 1st Epist. ch. i. v. 7. *The Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all Sin*? Nor shall the Saints after this Life sin any more, to require any new Atonement; nor do they carry the Seeds of Sin to Heaven with them, but drop them together with the Flesh, and all the Sources of Pain together; Now since neither *Christ* nor his Apostles give us any Intimation of such a Place as *Purgatory* for the Refinement or Purification of Souls after this Life, we have no ground to hearken to such a Fable.

The second Argument is this: *God has not provided any Medium to convey Pain to holy Souls after they have drop'd this Body of Flesh.* They are pardon'd, they are sanctify'd, they are accepted of God for ever; and since they are in no danger of sinning afresh by the Influences of corrupt Flesh and Blood, therefore they are in no fear of suffering any thing thereby. And if, as some Divines have suppos'd, there should be any pure æthereal Bodies or Vehicles provided for holy separate Spirits, when departed from this grosser Tabernacle of Flesh and Blood, yet it cannot be suppos'd that the God of all Grace would mix up any Seeds of Pain with that æthereal Matter, which is to be the occasional Habitation of sanctify'd Spirits in that State, nor that he would make any Avenues or Doors of Entrance for Pain into these refined Vehicles, when the State of their Sinning and their Trial is for ever finished.

Nor will the Body at the final Resurrection of the Saints be made for a Medium of any painful Sensations. All the Pains of Nature are ended, when the first Union between Flesh and Spirit is dissolved. When this Body lies down to sleep in the Dust, it shall never awake again with any of the Principles of Sin or Pain in it: *Tho' it be sown in Weakness, it is raised in Power; tho' it be sown in Dishonour, it is raised in Glory*; and we shall be made like the Son of God without Sorrow and without Sin for ever.

3d Argument. *There are no moral Causes or Reasons why there should be any thing of Pain provided for the heavenly State.* And if there be no moral Reasons for it, surely God will not provide Pains for his Creatures without Reason! But

this Thought leads me to the next general Head of my Discourse.

SECTION III.

The third general Inquiry which I proposed to make was this, *What may be the chief moral Reasons, Motives, or Designs of the blessed God in sending Pain on his Creatures here below; and at the same time I shall shew that these Designs and Purposes of God are finish'd, and they have no Place in Heaven*

1st, Then, Pain is sometimes sent into our Natures to awaken slothful and drowsy Christians out of their spiritual Slumbers, or to rouse stupid Sinners from a State of spiritual Death. Intense and sharp Pain of the Flesh has oftentimes been the appointed and effectual Means of Providence to attain these desirable Ends.

Pain is like a Rod in the Hand of God, wherewith he smites Sinners that are dead in their Trespases, and his Spirit joins with it to awaken them into spiritual Life. This Rod is sometimes so smarting and severe, that it will make a senseless and ungodly Wretch look upwards to the Hand that smites it, and take notice of the Rebuke of Heaven, tho' all the Thundering and Lightning of the Word, and all the Terrors of Hell denounced there, could not awaken them.

Acute Pain is also a common Instrument in our heavenly Father's Hand, to recover back-sliding Saints from their secure and drowsy Frames of Spirit. David often found it so, and speaks it plainly in the 38th and 39th Psalms; and in Psalm cxix. 67. he confesses, *before I was afflicted I went astray; but when he had felt the Scourge, he learnt to obey, and to keep the Word of his God.*

But there is no need of this Discipline in Heaven: no need of this smarting Scourge to make dead Sinners feel their Maker's Hand, in order to rouse them into Life, for there are no such Inhabitants in that World: Nor is there any need of such Divine and Paternal Discipline of God in those holy Mansions, where there is no drowsy Christian to be awakened, no wandering Spirit that wants to be reduced to Duty: And where the Designs of such smarting Strokes have no Place, Pain itself must be for ever banish'd; for God does not willingly afflict, nor take Delight in grieving the Children of Men, without substantial Reasons for it.

2. Another Use of bodily Pain and Anguish in this World is, to punish Men for their Faults and Follies, to make them know
what

what an evil and bitter thing it is to sin against God, and thereby to guard them against new Temptations, Jer. ii. 19. Thy own Wickedness shall correct thee, and thy Backsliding shall reprove thee ; i. e. by means of the smarting Chastisements they bring upon Men. When God makes the Sinner taste of the Fruit of his own Ways, he makes others also observe how hateful a thing every Sin is in the Sight of God, which he thinks fit so terribly to punish.

This is one general Reason why special Diseases, Maladies, and Plagues are spread over a whole Nation, (*viz.*) to punish the Sins of the Inhabitants, when they have provoked God by publick and spreading Iniquities. War and Famine, with all their terrible Train of Anguish and Agony, and the dying Pains which they diffuse over a Kingdom, are Rods of Punishment in the Hand of God, the Governor of the World, to declare from Heaven and Earth his Indignation against an ungodly and an unrighteous Age.

This indeed is one Design of the Pains and Torments of Hell, where God inflicts Pain without Intermission : And this is sometimes the Purpose of God in his painful Providences here on Earth : Shall I rise yet higher and say, that this was one great Design in the Eye of God, *when it pleased the Father to bruise his best beloved Son, and put him under the Impressions of extreme Pain, (viz.) to discover to the World the abominable Evil that was in Sin ? While Jesus stood in the stead of Sinners, then his Soul was exceeding sorrowful even to Death, and he sweat Drops of Blood under the Pressure of his Agonies, to let the World see what the Sin of Man had deserved : And sometimes God smites his own Children in this World with smarting Strokes of Correction, when they have indulged any Iniquity, to shew the World that God hates Sin in his own People wheresoever he finds it, and to bring his Children back again to the Paths of Righteousness.*

But in the heavenly State there are no Faults to punish, no Follies to chastize. Jesus, our Surety in the Days of his Flesh, has suffer'd those Sorrows which made Atonement for Sin, and that Anguish of his holy Soul, and the Blood of his Cross, have satisfy'd the Demands of God ; so that with Honour he can pardon ten thousand penitent Criminals, and provide an Inheritance of Ease and Blessedness for them for ever. When once we are dismiss'd from this Body, the Spirit

Spirit is thoroughly sanctify'd, and there is no Fire of Purgatory needful to burn out the Remains of Sin : Those foolish invented Flames are but false Fire, kindled by the Priests of Rome to fright the Souls of the Dying, and to squeeze Money out of them to purchase so many vain and idle Masses to relieve the Souls of the Dead. Upon our actual Release from this Flesh and Blood, neither the Guilt nor the Power of Sin shall attend the Saints in their Flight to Heaven : All the Spirits that arrive there are made perfect in Holiness without new Scourges, and commence a State of Felicity that shall never be interrupted.

3. God has appointed Pain in this World, *to exercise and try the Virtues and the Graces of his People.* As Gold is thrown into the Fire to prove and try how pure it is from any coarse Alloy, so the Children of God are sometimes left for a Season in the Furnace of Sufferings, partly to refine them from their Dross, and partly to discover their Purity and their substantial Weight and Worth.

Sometimes God lays *smarting Pain with his own Hand* on the Flesh of his People, on purpose to try their Graces : When we endure the Pain without murmuring at Providence, then it is we come off Conquerors. Christian Submission and Silence under the Hand of God, is one Way to Victory. *I was dumb, says David, and open'd not my Mouth, because thou didst it, Psal. xxxix.* Our Love to God, our Resignation to his Will, our holy Fortitude and our Patience find a proper Trial in such smarting Seasons. Perhaps when some severe Pain first seizes and surprizes us, we find ourselves like a *wild Bull in a Net*, and all the Powers of Nature are thrown into Tumult and Disquietude so that we have no Possession of our own Spirits ; but when the Hand of God has continued us a while under this divine Discipline, we learn to bow down to his Sovereignty, we lie at his Footstool calm and composed : He brings our haughty and reluctant Spirits down to his Foot, and makes us lie humble in the Dust, and we wait with Patience the Hour of his Release. *Rom. v. 3, 4. Tribulation worketh Patience, and Patience under Tribulation gives us Experience of the Dealings of God with his People, and makes our Way to a confirmed Hope in his Love.* The Evidence of our various Graces grows brighter and stronger under a smarting Rod, till we are settled in a joyful Confidence, and the Soul rests in God himself.

Sometimes

Sometimes he has permitted evil Angels to put the Flesh to Pain, for the Trial of his Children ; so Job was smitten with sore Boils from Head to Foot by the Malice of Satan, at the Permission of God ; but he knows the Way that I take, says this holy Man, and when he has tried me I shall come forth as Gold ; for my Foot hath held his Steps thro' all these Trials, neither have I gone back from the Commandments of his Lips, Job xxiii. 10, 12.

At other times he suffers wicked Men to spend their own Malice, and to inflict dreadful Pains on his own Children : Look back to the Years of ancient Persecution in the Land of Israel, under Jewish or Heathen Tyrants ; review the Annals of Great Britain ; look over the Seas into Popish Kingdoms ; take a View of the cursed Courts of Inquisition in Spain, Portugal and Italy ; behold the Weapons, the Scourges, the Racks, the Machines of Torture and Engines of Cruelty, devised by the barbarous and inhuman Wit of Men, to constrain the Saints to renounce their Faith and dishonour their Saviour. See the slow Fires where the Martyrs have been roasted to Death with lingering Torment : These are Seasons of terrible Trial indeed, whereby the Malice of Satan and Antichrist would force the Servants of God, and the Followers of the Lamb, into sinful Compliances with their Idolatry, or a Desertion of their Post of Duty : But the Spirit of God has supported his Children to bear a glorious Testimony to pure and undefiled Religion ; and they have seem'd to mock the Rage of their Tormentors, to defy all the Stings of Pain, and triumphed over all their vain Attempts, to compel them to sin against their God.

One would sometimes be ready to wonder, that a God of infinite Mercy and Compassion should suffer his own dear Children to be tried in so terrible a manner as this ; but unsearchable Wisdom is with him, and he does not give an Account to Men of all the Reasons and the Rules of his Conduct. This has been his Method of Providence with his Saints at especial Seasons, under the Jewish and the Christian Dispensations, and perhaps under all the Dispensations of God to Men, from the Days of Cain and Abel to the present Hour. Our blessed Lord has given us many Warnings of it in his Word by his own Mouth, and by all his three Apostles, Paul, Peter, and John : They that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer Persecution : Think it not strange

strange therefore concerning the fiery Trial: The Devil, by his wicked Agents, shall cast some of you into Prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have Tribulation ten Days, but fear none of the Things which thou shalt suffer: Be thou faithful unto Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life.

But blessed be God that this World is the only Stage of such Trials. As soon as the State of Probation is finished, the State of Recompence begins. Such hard and painful Exercises to try the Virtues of the Saints, have no Place in that World which was not made for a Stage of Trial and Conflict, but a Palace of glorious Reward. *Heaven is the Place where Crowns and Prizes are distributed to all those blessed ones who have endured Temptation, and who have been found faithful to the Death.* These sharp and dreadful Combats with Pain, have no Place among Conquerors, who have finish'd their Warfare, and have begun their Triumph.

4. *Pain is sent us by the Hand of Providence to teach us many a Lesson both of Truth and Duty, which perhaps we should never have learnt so well without it.* This sharp Sensation awakens our best Powers to attend to those Truths and Duties which we took less notice of before: In the time of perfect Ease we are ready to let them lie neglected or forgotten, till God our great Master takes his Rod in hand for our Instruction.

SECTION IV.

And this leads me to the *fourth general Head* of my Discourse, and that is, to enquire *what are those spiritual Lessons which may be learnt on Earth from the Pains we have suffer'd, or may suffer in the Flesh.* I shall divide them into two sorts, (*viz.:*) *Lessons of Instruction* in useful Truth, and *Lessons of Duty*, or *Practical Christianity*; and there are many of each kind with which the Disciples of *Christ in this World* may be better acquainted, by the actual Sensations of Pain, than any other Way: *In this World* I say, and *in this only*; for *in Heaven* most of these *Lessons of Doctrine and Practice* are utterly needless to be taught, either because they have been so perfectly well known to all its Inhabitants before, and their present Situation makes it impossible to forget them; or they shall be let into the fuller Knowledge of them in Heaven in a far superior Way of Instruction, and without any such uneasy Discipline. And this I shall evidently make appear, when I have first enumerated all these *general Lessons*

sons both of Truth and Duty, and shewn how wisely the Great God has appointed them to be taught here on Earth, under the Scourge and the wholesome Discipline of pain in the Flesh.

1. *The Lessons of Instruction here on Earth, or the useful Truths, are such as these :*

1. Pain teaches us feelingly *what feeble Creatures we are, and how entirely dependant on God our Maker for every Hour and Moment of Ease.* We are naturally wild and wanton Creatures, and especially in the Season of Youth, our gayer powers are gadding abroad at the Call of every Temptation ; but when God sends his Arrows into our Flesh, he arrests us on a sudden, and teaches us that we are but Men, poor feeble dying Creatures, soon crushed, and sinking under his Hand. We are ready to exult in the Vigour of Youth, when animal Nature, in its prime of Strength and Glory, raises our pride, and supports us in a sort of Self-sufficiency ; we are so vain and foolish, as to imagine nothing can hurt us : But when the Pain of a little Nerve seizes us, and we feel the acute Twinges of it, we are made to confess that *our Flesh is not Iron, nor our Bones Brass ;* that we are by no means the Lords of ourselves, or Sovereigns over our own Nature : We cannot remove the least Degree of Pain, till the Lord who sent it takes off his Hand, and commands the Smart to cease. If the Torture fix itself but in a Finger or a Toe, or in the little Nerve of a Tooth, what intense Agonies may it create in us, and that beyond all the Relief of Medicines, till the Moment wherein God shall give us Ease. This Lesson of the Frailty of human Nature must be some time written upon our Hearts in deep and smarting Characters, by intense Pain, before we have learnt it well ; and this gives us, for time to come, a happy Guard against our Pride and Vanity. *Psal. xxxix. 10.* When David felt the Stroke of the Hand of God upon him, and corrected him with sharp Rebukes for his Iniquity, he makes an humble Address to God, and acknowledges that his *Beauty, and all the boasted Excellencies of Flesh and Blood, consume away like a Moth ; surely every Man is Vanity ;* *Psal. xxxix. 10, 11.*

2. The next useful Truth in which Pain instructs us, is *the great Evil that is contain'd in the Nature of Sin, because it is the occasion of such intense Pain and Misery to human Nature.*

I grant, I have hinted this before, but I would have it more powerfully impress'd upon our Spirits, and therefore I introduce it here again in this Part of my Discourse as a *spiritual Lesson*, which we learn under the Discipline of our Heavenly Father.

'Tis true indeed that innocent Nature was made capable of Pain in the first *Adam*, and the innocent Nature of the Man *Jesus Christ* suffer'd acute Pain, when he came in the Likeness of sinful Flesh : But if *Adam* had continued in his State of Innocence, it is a great Question with me, whether he or his Children would have actually tasted or felt what acute Pain is ; I mean such *Pain* as we now suffer, such as makes us so far unhappy, and such as we cannot immediately relieve.

It may be granted, that natural Hunger and Thirst, and Weariness after Labour, would have carried in them some Degrees of Pain or Uneasiness, even in the State of Innocence ; but these are necessary to awaken Nature to seek Food and Rest, and to put the Man in mind to supply his natural Wants ; and Man might have immediately relieved them himself, for the Supplies of Ease were at Hand ; and these sort of Uneasinesses were abundantly compensated by the Pleasure of Rest and Food, and perhaps they were in some measure necessary to make Food and Rest pleasant.

But surely if Sin had never been known in our World, all the Pain that arises from inward Diseases of Nature, or from outward Violence, had been a Stranger to human Race, an unknown Evil among the Sons of Men, as it is among the holy Angels, the Sons of God. There had been no Distempers or acute Pains to meet young Babes at their Entrance into this World ; no Maladies to attend the Sons and Daughters of *Adam* through the Journey of Life ; and they should have been translated to some higher and happier Region, without Death, and without Pain.

'Twas the eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, that acquainted *Adam* and his Offspring with the Evil of Pain. Or if Pain could have attack'd Innocence in any Form or Degree, it would have been but in a way of Trial, to exercise and illustrate his Virtues ; and if he had endured the Test, and continued innocent, I am satisfy'd he should never have felt any Pain which was not over-balanced with superior Pleasure, or abundantly recompensed by succeeding Rewards and Satisfaction.

Some Persons indeed have supposed it within the Reach of the Sovereignty of God to afflict and torment a sinless Creature: Yet I think it is hardly consistent with his Goodness, or his Equity, to constrain an innocent Being, which has no Sin, to suffer Pain without his own Consent, and without giving that Creature equal or superior Pleasure as a Recompence. Both those were the Case in the Sufferings of our Blessed Lord in his human Nature, who was perfectly innocent: 'Twas with his own Consent that he gave himself up to be a Sacrifice, when *it pleased the Father to bruise him and put him to Grief*; and God rewarded him with transcendent Honours and Joys after his Passion, he exalted him to his own right Hand and his Throne, and gave him Authority over all Things.

In general therefore we have sufficient Reason to say, that as Sin brought in Death into human Nature, so it was Sin that brought in Pain also; and wheresoever there is any Pain suffer'd among the Sons and Daughters of Men, I am sure we may venture to assert boldly, that the Sufferer may learn the Evil of Sin. Even the Son of God himself, when he suffer'd Pain in his Body, as well as Anguish in his Spirit, has told us by his Apostles, that our Sins were the Causes of it; *he bore our Sins on his own Body on the Tree, and for our Iniquities he was bruised*, so says *Isaiah* the Prophet, and so speaks *Peter* the Apostle.

And sometimes the Providence of God is pleased to point out to us the particular Sin we are guilty of by the special Punishment which he inflicts. In *cvi Psalm 17, 18*. *Fools are said to be afflicted*, i. e. with Pain and Sickness, *because of their Transgressions* of Riot and Intemperance; *because of their Transgressions* of Riot and Intemperance; *their Soul abhors all manner of Meat, and they draw near to the Gates of Death*. Sickness and Pain over-balance all the pleasures of Luxury in Meats and Drinks, and make the *Epicure* pay dear for the Elegance of his Palate, and the sweet Relish of his Morsels or his Cups. The Drunkard, in his Debauches, is preparing some smarting Pain for his own punishment. And let us all be so wise as to learn this Lesson by the Pains we feel, that Sin which introduced them into the World is an abominable Thing in the Sight of God, because it provokes him to use such smarting Strokes of Discipline in order to recover us from our Folly and to reduce us back again to the Paths of Righteousness.

O blessed Smart ! O happy Pain that helps to soften the Heart of a Sinner, and melts it to receive divine Instruction, which before was hard as Iron, and attended to no divine Counsel ! We are ready to wander from God, and forget him amongst the Months and the Years of Ease and pleasure ; but when the Soul is melted in this Furnace of painful Sufferings, it more easily receives some divine Stamp, some lasting Impression of Truth, which the Words of the Preacher and the Book of God had before inculcated without Success, and repeated almost in vain. Happy is the Soul that learns this Lesson thoroughly, and gains a more lasting Acquaintance with the Evil of Sin, and Abhorrence of it, under the smarting Stroke of the Hand of God. *Blessed is the Man whom thou correctest, O Lord, and teachest him the Truths that are written in thy Law, Psalm xciv. 12.*

3. Pain in the Flesh teaches us also *how dreadfully the great God can punish Sin and Sinners when he pleases, in this World or in the other.* 'Tis written in the Song of Moses, the Man of God, *Psal. xc. 11. According to thy Fear, so is thy Wrath*, i. e. the Displeasure and Anger of the blessed God is as terrible as we can fear it to be ; and he can inflict on us such intense Pains and Agonies, whose distressing Smart we may learn by feeling a little of them. Unknown Multiplications of racking Pain, lengthen'd out beyond Years and Ages, is part of the Description of hellish Torments, and the other Part lies in the bitter Twinges of Conscience and keen Remorse of Soul for our past Iniquities, but without all Hope. Behold a Man under a sharp Fit of the Gout or Stone, which wrings the Groans from his Heart, and Tears from his Eye-Lids ; this is the Hand of God in the present World, where there are many Mixtures of divine Goodness ; but if ever we should be so wilfully unhappy as to be plunged into those Regions where the Almighty Vengeance of God reigns, without one Beam of divine Light or Love, this must be dreadful indeed. *'Tis a fearful thing to fall into the Hands of the living God, Heb. x. 31. to be banish'd far off from all that is holy and happy, and to be confin'd to that dark Dungeon, that Place of Torture, where the gnawing Worm of Conscience never dies, and where the Fire of Divine Anger is never quenched.*

We who are made up of Flesh and Blood, which is interwoven with many Nerves and Muscles, and Membranes,

may

may learn a little of the Terrors of the Lord, if we reflect that every Nerve, Muscle, and Membrane of the Body is capable of giving us most sharp and painful Sensations. We may be wounded in every sensible Part of Nature ; Smart and Anguish may enter in at every Pore, and make almost every Atom of our Constitution an Instrument of our Anguish. *Fearfully and wonderfully are we formed* indeed, capable of Pain all over us ; and if a God should see fit to punish Sin to its full Desert, and penetrate every Atom of our Nature with Pain, what surprising and intolerable Misery must that be ? And if God should raise the Wicked out of their Graves to dwell in such sort of Bodies again, on purpose to shew his just Anger against Sin in their Punishment, how dreadful, beyond Expression, must their Anguish be thro' the long Ages of Eternity ? God can form even such Bodies for Immortality, and can sustain them to endure everlasting Agonies.

Let us think again, that when the Hand of our Creator sends Pain into our Flesh, we cannot avoid it, we cannot fly from it, we carry it with us wheresoever we go : His Arrows stick fast in us, and we cannot shake them off ; oftentimes it appears that we can find no Relief from Creatures : and if by the Destruction of ourselves, *i. e.* of these Bodies, we plunge ourselves into the World of Spirits at once, we shall find the same God of Holiness and Vengeance there, who can pierce our Souls with unknown Sorrows, equal, if not superior, to all that we felt in the Flesh. *If I make my Bed in the Grave, Lord, thou art there,* thy Hand of Justice and Punishment would find me out.

What a formidable Thing it is to such Creatures as we are, to have God, our Maker, for our Enemy ? that God who has all the Tribes of Pain and Disease, and the innumerable Host of Maladies at his Command ? He fills the Air in which we breathe with Fevers and Pestilences as often as he will : The Gout and the Stone arrest and seize us by his Order, and stretch us upon a Bed of Pain : Rheumatisms and Cholicks come and go wheresoever he sends them, and execute his Anger against Criminals. He keeps in his Hand all the various Springs of Pain, and every invisible Rack that can torment the Head or Members, the Bowels or the Joints of Man : He sets them at their dreadful Work when and where he pleases. Let the Sinner

tremble at the Name of his Power and Terror, who can fill both Flesh and Spirit with thrilling Agonies ; and yet he never punishes beyond what our Iniquities deserve. How necessary is it for such sinful and guilty Beings as we are whose Natures are capable of such constant and acute Sensations of Pain, to have the God of Nature our Friend and our reconciled God ?

4. When we feel the acute Pains of Nature, we may learn something of the exceeding Greatness of the Love of Christ, even the Son of God, that glorious Spirit, who took upon him Flesh and Blood for our Sakes, that he might be capable of Pain and Death, though he had never sinned. He endured intense Anguish, to make Atonement for our Crimes. Because the Children whom he came to save from Misery were Partakers of Flesh and Blood, he also himself took Part of the same, that he might suffer in the Flesh, and by his Sufferings put away our Sins.

Happy was he in his Father's Bosom, and the Delight of his Soul thro' many long Ages before his Incarnation : But he condescended to be born in the Likeness of sinful Flesh, that he might feel such Smart and Sorrows as our Sins had exposed us to. His innocent and holy Soul was incapable of such sort of Sufferings till he put on this Clothing of human Nature, and became a Surety for sinful perishing Creatures.

Let us survey his Sufferings a little. He was born to Sorrow, and train'd up thro' the common uneasy Circumstances of the Infant and Childish State, till he grew up to Man : What Pains did attend him in Hunger and Thirst, and Weariness, while he travell'd on foot from City to City, thro' Wilds and Desarts, where there was no Food nor Rest ? The Son of Man sometimes wanted the common Bread of Nature, nor had he were to lay his Head. What uneasy Sensations was he exposed to, when he was buffeted, when he was smitten on the Check, when his tender Flesh was scourged with Whips, and his Temples were crown'd with Thorns, when his Hands and his Feet were barbarously torn with rude Nails, and fasten'd to the Cross, where the whole Weight of his Body hung on those Wounds ? And what Man or Angel can tell the inward Anguish, when his Soul was exceeding sorrowful unto Death, and the Conflicts and Agonies of his Spirit forced out the Drops of bloody

bloody Sweat through every Pore. 'Twas by the extreme Torture of his Nature that he was supposed to expire on the Cross ; these were the Pangs of his Atonement and Agonies that expiated the Sins of Men.

O Blessed *Jesus* ! what manner of Sufferings were these ? And what manner of Love was it that willingly gave up thy sacred Nature to sustain them ? And what was the Design of them, but to deliver us from the Wrath of God in Hell, to save our Flesh and Spirit from eternal Anguish and Distress there ? Why was he *made* such a *Curse* for us, but that he might *redeem* us from the *Curse* of the *Law*, and the just Punishment of our own Iniquities.

Let us carry our Thoughts of his Love, and our Benefit by it, yet one step further : Was it not by these Sorrows, and this painful Passion, that he provided for us this very Heaven of Happiness, where we shall be for ever freed from all Pain ? Were they not all endured by him to procure a Paradise of Pleasure, a Mansion of everlasting Peace and Joy for guilty Creatures, who had merited everlasting Pain ? Was it not by these his Agonies in the mortal Body, which he assumed, that he purchased for each of us a glorify'd Body, strong and immortal as his own when he rose from the Dead, a Body which has no Seeds of Disease or Pain in it, no Springs of Mortality or Death ? May Glory, Honour and Praise, with supreme Pleasure, ever attend the sacred Person of our Redeemer, whose Sorrows and Anguish of Flesh and Spirit were equal to our Misery, and to his own Compassion.

5. Another Lesson, which we are taught by the long and tiresome Pains of Nature, is the *Value and Worth of the Word of God, and the Sweetness of a Promise, which can give the kindest Relief to a painful Hour, and sooth the Anguish of Nature.* They teach us the Excellency of the Covenant of Grace, which has sometimes strengthen'd the feeblest Pieces of human Nature to bear intense Sufferings in the Body, and which sanctifies them all to our Advantage. Painful and tiresome Maladies teach us to improve the Promises to valuable Purposes, and the Promises take away half the Smart of our Pains by the Sensations of divine Love let into the Soul.

We read of Philosophers and Heroes in some ancient Histories, who could endure Pain by dint of Reasoning, by a

Pride of their Science, by an Obstinacy of Heart, or by natural Courage; but a Christian takes the Word of a Promise, and lies down upon it in the midst of intense Pains of Nature; and the Pleasure of Devotion supplies him with such Ease, that all the Reasonings of Philosophy, all the Courage of Nature, all the Anodynes of Medicine, and soothing Plasters have attempted without Success. When a Child of God can read his Father's Love in a Promise, and by searching into the Qualifications of his own Soul, can lay faster Hold of it by a living Faith, the Rage of his Pain is much allay'd, and made half easy. A Promise is a sweet Couch to rest a languishing Body in the midst of Pains, and a soft Repose for the Head or Heart-ach.

The *Stoicks* pretended to give Ease to Pain, by persuading themselves *there was no Evil in it*; as tho' the mere misnaming of Things would destroy their Nature: But the Christian, by a sweet Submission to the Evil which his heavenly Father inflicts upon his Flesh, reposes himself at the Foot of God on the Covenant of Grace, and bears the Wounds and the Smart with much more Serenity and Honour. " 'Tis my heavenly Father that scourges me, and I know he designs me no Hurt, tho' he fills my Flesh with present Pain: His own Presence, and the Sense of his Love, soften the Anguish of all that I feel: He bids me not yield to Fear, for when I *pass thro' the Fires he will be with me*; and he that loved me, and died for me, has suffered greater Sorrows and more Anguish on my Account, than what he calls me to bear under the Strokes of his wise and holy Discipline: He has left his Word with me as an universal Medicine to relieve me under all my Anguish, till he shall bring me to those Mansions on high, where Sorrows and Pains are found no more.

6. Anguish and Pain of Nature here on Earth teach us the Excellency and Use of the Mercy-Seat in Heaven, and the admirable Privilege of Prayer. Even the Sons of meer Nature are ready to think of God at such a Season; and they who never pray'd before, pour out a Prayer before him when his Chast'ning is upon them, *Isai. xxvi. 16.* An Hour of twinging and tormenting Pain, when Creatures and Medicines can give no Relief, drives them to the Throne of God to try whether he will relieve them or no. But much more delightful is it for a Child of God that has been used to ad-

dress the Throne of Grace, to run thither with Pleasure and Hope, and to spread all his Anguish before the Face of his heavenly Father. The blessed God has built this Mercy-Seat for his People to bring all their Sorrows thither, and spread them before his Eyes in all their smarting Circumstances, and he has been often pleased to speak a Word of Relief.

Our Lord *Jesus Christ*, when he dwelt in Flesh and Blood, practised this Part of Religion with holy Satisfaction and Success. *Being in an Agony he pray'd more earnestly*, and an Angel was sent to strengthen and comfort him, *Luke xxii. 43, 44.* This was the Relief of holy *David* in ancient Times, *Psal. xxv. 18. Look upon my Affliction and my Pain, and pardon all my Sins. Psal. cxvi. 3, 4. The Sorrows of Death compassed me, and the Pains of Hell, or the Grave, took hold of me; then called I upon the Name of the Lord I O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my Soul.* And when he found a gracious Answer to his Request, he acknowledges the Grace of God therein, and charges his Soul to dwell near to God; *return to thy Rest, O my Soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee: I was brought low, and he helped me, he deliver'd my Soul from Death, and mine Eyes from Tears.*

But we have stronger Encouragement than *David* was acquainted with, since 'tis revealed to us, that we have an *High-Priest* at this Throne ready to bespeak all necessary Relief for us there, *Heb. ii. 18. An High-Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our Infirmities*, who has sustain'd the same Sorrows and Pains in the Flesh, who can pity and relieve his People under their Maladies and acutest Anguish, *Heb. iv. 15.* When we groan and sigh under continued Pains, they are ready to make Nature weary and faint; We groan unto the Lord, who knows the Language of our Frailty: Our High Priest carries every Groan to the Mercy-Seat: His Compassion works towards his Brethren, and he will suffer them to continue no longer under this Discipline, than is necessary for their own best Improvement and Happiness.

O how much of this sort of Consolation has many a Christian learnt and tasted, by a holy Intercourse with Heaven, in such painful Seasons? How much has he learnt of the tender Mercies of God the Father, and of the Pity and Sympathy of our great High-Priest above? Who would

be content to live in such a painful World as this is, without the Pleasure and Relief of Prayer? Who would live without an Interest at this Mercy-Seat, and without the supporting Friendship of this Advocate at the Throne?

Thus I have run over the chief *Lessons of Instruction* or *Doctrine*, which may be derived from our Sensations of Pain here in this World: But there is no need of this sort of Discipline in the blessed Regions of Heaven to teach the Inhabitants such Truths.

They well remember *what feeble helpless Creatures they were* when they dwelt in Flesh and Blood; but they have put off those fleshly Garments of Mortality, with all its Weaknesses together. The Spirits of the Blessed know nothing of those Frailties, nor shall the Bodies of the Saints, new-raised from the Dust, bring back any of their old Infirmities with them. These blessed Creatures know well *how intirely dependent they are for all things upon God* their Creator, without the need of Pains and Maladies to teach them, for they live every Moment with God, and in a full Dependance upon him: They are supported in their Life, and and all its everlasting Blessings, by his immediate Presence, Power and Mercy.

They have no need of Pain in those Fields or Gardens of Pleasure to teach them *the Evil of Sin*; they well remember all the Sorrows they have pass'd thro' in their mortal State, while they were traversing the Wilderness of this World, and they know that Sin was the Cause of them all. They see *the Evil of Sin* in the Glass of the divine Holiness, and the hateful Contrariety that is in it to the Nature of God as discover'd in the immediate Light of all his Perfections, his Wisdom, his Truth and his Goodness. They behold the *Evil of Sin* in the Marks of the Sufferings of their blessed Saviour; he appears in Glory *as the Lamb that was slain*, and carries some Memorials of his Death about him, to let the Saints know for ever what he has suffer'd to make Atonement for their Sins.

Nor have the Blessed above any need to learn *how dreadfully God can punish Sin and Sinners*, while they behold his Indignation going forth in a long and endless Stream, to make the wicked Enemies of God in Hell for ever justly miserable: And in this Sense it may be said, that *the Smoke of their Torments comes up before God and his holy Angels, and his Saints* for ever.

Nor

Nor do these happy Beings stand in need of new Sensations of Pain, to teach them *the exceeding Greatness of the Love of Christ*, who exposed himself to intense and smarting Anguish, both of Flesh and Spirit, to procure their Salvation: For while they dwell amidst the Blessednesses of that State, which the Redeemer purchased with the Price of his own Sufferings, they can never forget his Love.

Nor do they want to learn in Heaven the *Value of the Word of God and his Promises*, by which they were supported under their Pains and Sorrows in this mortal State. Those Promises have been fulfill'd to them partly on Earth, and in a more glorious and abundant manner in the heavenly World. They relish the Sweetness of all those Words of Mercy, in reviewing the Means whereby Divine Grace sustain'd them in their former State of Trial, and in the compleat Accomplishment of the best of those Promises in their present Situation amidst ten thousand endless Blessings.

And if any of them were too cold and remiss, and infrequent in their Applications to the Mercy-Seat by Prayer, when they were here on Earth, and stood in need of Chastisement to make them pour out their Prayers to God, yet they can never forget *the Value of this Privilege*, while they themselves dwell round about the Throne, and behold all their ancient sincere Addresses to the Mercy-Seat answer'd and swallow'd up in the full Fruition of their present Glories and Joys. *Praise* is properly the Language of Heaven, when all their Wants are supplied, and their *Prayers* on Earth are finished; and whatever further Desires they may have to present before God, the Throne of Grace is ever at hand, and God himself is ever in the midst of them to bestow every proper Blessing in its Season that belongs to the heavenly World. Not one of them can any more stand in need of Chastisement or painful Exercises of the Flesh to drive them to the Throne of God, while they are at Home in their Father's House, and for ever near him and his All-sufficiency. 'Tis from thence they are constantly deriving immortal Supplies of Blessedness, as from a Spring that will never fail.

SECTION V.

I proceed now to consider in the last Place, what are the *Practical Lessons which Pain may teach us while we are here on Earth* in our State of Probation and Discipline, and shall

afterward make it evident, that there is *no need of Pain in Heaven for the same Purposes.*

I. The frequent Returns of Pain may put us in mind to offer to God his due Sacrifices of Praise for the Months and Tears of Ease which we have enjoy'd; we are ready to forget the Mercy of God herein, unless we are awaken'd by new painful Sensations; and when we experience new Relief, then our Lips are open'd with Thankfulness, and our Mouth shews forth his Praise: Then we cry out with devout Language, *Blessed be the Lord that has deliver'd us!* When we have been oppress'd for some time with extream Anguish, then one Day, or one Hour of Ease fills the Heart and the Tongue with Thankfulness; *blessed be the God of Nature that has appointed Medicines to restore our Ease, and blessed be that Goodness that has given Success to them!* What a rich Mercy is it under our acute Torments, that there are Methods of Relief and Healing found among the Powers of Nature, among the Plants and the Herbs, and the Mineral Stores which are under Ground? Blessed be the Lord, who in the Course of his Providence has given Skill to Physicians to compose and to apply the proper Means of Relief? Blessed be that Hand that has planted every Herb in the Field or the Garden, and has made the Bowels of the Earth to teem with Medicines for the Recovery of our Health and Ease, and blessed be his Name who has rebuked our Maladies, who has constrain'd the smarting Diseases to depart by the Use of Balms and Balsams that are happily apply'd!

While we enjoy the Benefits of common Life, in Health of Body and in easy Circumstances, we are too often thoughtless of the Hand of God, which showers down these Favours of Heaven upon us in a long and constant Succession; but when he sees fit to touch us with his Finger, and awaken some lurking Malady within us, our Ease vanishes, our Days are restless and painful, and tiresome Nights of Darkness pass over us without Sleep or Repose. Then we repent that we have so long forgotten the God of our Mercies; and we learn to lift up our Praises to the Lord, that every Night of our Lives has not been restless, that every Day and Hour has not been a Season of racking Pain. Blessed be the Lord that enables us, without Anguish or Uneasiness, to fulfil the common Business of the Day; and blessed be his Hand that draws the peaceful Curtains of the Night

Night round about us ! And even in the midst of moderate Pains, we bless his Name who gives us refreshing Slumbers ; and we grow more careful to employ and improve every Moment of returning Ease, as the most proper Way of expressing our Thankfulness to our Almighty Healer.

Alas, what poor, sorry, sinful Creatures are we in the present State, who want to be taught the Value of our Mercies by the Removal of them ! The Man of a robust and vigorous Make, and a healthy Constitution, knows not the true Worth of Health and Ease, nor sets a due Value upon these Blessings of Heaven ; but we are taught to thank God feelingly, for an easy Hour after long-repeated Twinges of Pain : We bless that Goodness which gives us an easy Night after a Day of distressing Anguish. Blessed be the God of Nature and Grace, that has not made the Gout or the Stone immortal, nor subjected our sensible Powers to an everlasting Cholick or Tooth-ach.

2. Pain in the Flesh more effectually teaches us to *sympathize with those who suffer*. We learn a Tenderness of Soul experimentally by our own Sufferings. We general'y love *Self* so well, that we forget our Neighbours under special Tribulation and Distress, unless we are made to feel them too. In a particular Manner, when our Nature is pinched and pierced through with some smarting Malady, we learn to pity those who lie groaning under the same Disease. A Kindred of Sorrows and Sufferings works up our Natures into Compassion, and we find our own Hearts more sensibly affected with the Groans of our Friends under a sharp Fit of the Gout or Rheumatism, when we our selves have felt the Stings of the same Distemper.

Our blessed Saviour himself, though he wanted not Compassion and Love to the Children of Men, since he came down from Heaven on purpose to die for them, yet he is represented to us as our merciful High Priest, who had learnt Sympathy and Compassion to our Sorrows in the same Way of Experience as we learn it. He was *incompassed about with Infirmities*, when he took the sinless Frailties of our Nature upon him, that he might learn to pity us under those Frailties. *In that he himself hath suffer'd being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted : For we have not an High-Priest which cannot be touched with the Feeling of our Infirmities, but was in all Points tempted like as we are, tho' he was*
always

always without Sin; and by the Things which he suffer'd, he may be said, after the manner of Men, to learn Sympathy and Pity to miserable Creatures, as well as Obedience to God, who is blessed for ever, *Heb. ii. 18. and iv. 15. and v. 2, 8.*

3. Since our Natures are subject to Pain, it should teach us *Watchfulness against every Sin, lest we double our own Distresses by the Mixture of Guilt with them.* How careful should we be to keep always a clear Conscience, that we may be able at all times to look up with Pleasure to the Hand of God who smites us, and be better compos'd to endure the Pains which he inflicts upon us for our Trial and Improvement in Grace. Innocence and Piety, and a peaceful Conscience, are an admirable Defence to support the Spirit against the overwhelming Efforts of bodily Pain: But when inward Reproaches of Mind, and a racking Conscience join with acute Pain in the Flesh, 'tis double Misery, and aggravated Wretchedness. The Scourges and inward Remorse of our own Hearts, join'd to the Sorrows of Nature, add Torment to Torment. How dreadful is it when we are forced to confess, *I have procured all this to myself by Intemperance, by my Rashness, by my Obstinacy against the Advice of Friends, and Rebellion against the Commands of God!*

Probably 'twas such Circumstances as these, that gave the Soul of David double Anguish, *when his Bones waxed old, thro' his roaring all the Day long, when Day and Night the Hand of God was heavy upon him, and his Moisture was turned into the Drought of Summer; when he complain'd unto God, Thine Arrows stick fast in me, and thy Hand presseth me sore: There is no Soundness in my Flesh, because of thine Anger; nor any Rest in my Bones, because of my Sin. Mine Iniquities are gone over mine Head as an heavy Burden. They are too heavy for me. Deep calls unto Deep at the Noise of thy Water-Spouts, all thy Waves and thy Billows are gone over me. The Deep of Anguish in my Flesh calls to the Deep of Sorrow in my Soul, and make a tremendous Tumult within me. My Wounds stink, and are corrupt, because of my Foolishness: I am feeble and sore broken; I have roared by reason of the Disquietness of my Heart; nor could he find any Rest or Ease till he acknowledged his Sin unto God, and confess'd his Transgressions, and till he had some comfortable Hope that God had forgiven the Iniquity of his Sin.* See this sorrowful Scene exemplify'd in a very affecting manner in the 32^d and 38th *Psalms.*

Psalms. Happy is the Man that walks closely with his God in the Days of Health and Ease, that whenever it shall please his heavenly Father to try him with smarting Pain, he may find sweet Relief from a peaceful Conscience, and humble Appeals to God concerning his own Sincerity and Watchfulness.

4. Pain in the Flesh may sometimes be sent by the Hand of God, to teach us *to wean ourselves by degrees from this Body, which we love too well; this Body, which has all the Springs of Pain in it.* How little should we be fond of this Flesh and Blood in the present feeble State, wherein we are continually liable to one Malady or another; to the Head-ach or the Heart-ach, to Wounds or Bruises, and uneasy Sensations of various Kinds? Nor can the Soul secure itself from them, while 'tis so closely united to this mortal Body. And yet we are too fond of our present Dwelling, though it be but a Cottage of Clay, feeble and ruinous, where the Winds and the Storms are continually ready to break in and distress us. A sorry Habitation indeed for an immortal Spirit, since Sin has mingled so many Diseases in our Constitution, has made so many Avenues for Smart and Anguish in our Flesh, and we are capable of admitting Pain and Agonies at every Pore.

Pain is appointed to be a sort of Balance to the *tempting Pleasures of Life*, and to make us feel that perfect Happiness does not grow among the Inhabitants of Flesh and Blood. Pain takes away the Pleasures of the Day, and the Repose of the Night, and makes Life bitter in all the returning Seasons. The God of Nature and Grace is pleased, by sending Sickness and Pain, to loosen his own Children by degrees from their fond Attachment to this fleshly Tabernacle, and to make us willing to depart at his Call.

A long Continuance of Pain, or the frequent repeated Twinges of it, will *teach a Christian and incline him to meet Death with Courage, at the appointed Hour of Release.* This will much abate the Fierceness of the King of Terrors, when he appears as a Sovereign Physician to finish every Malady of Nature. Death is sanctify'd to the holy Soul, and by the Covenant of Grace this Curse of Nature is changed into a Blessing. The Grave is a safe retiring Place from all the Attacks of Disease and Anguish: And there are some Incurables here on Earth, which can find no perfect Relief.

Relief but in the Grave. Neither Maladies, nor Tyrants can stretch their Terrors beyond this Life ; and if we can but look upon Death as a conquer'd Enemy, and its Sting taken away by the Death of *Christ*, we shall easily venture into this last Combat, and obtain an everlasting Victory. Blessed be God for the Grave as a Refuge from smarting Pains ! 'Thanks be to God thro' *Christ Jesus*, who enables us to triumph over the last Pain of Nature, and to say, *O Death where is thy Sting ? and O Grave where is thy Victory ?*

In the fifth and last Place, by the Pains that we suffer in this Body, *we are taught to breathe after the Blessedness of the heavenly State, wherein there shall be no Pain.* When the Soul is dismiss'd from the Bonds of Flesh, and presented before God in the World of Spirits without Spot or Blemish by *Jesus* our great Forerunner, it is then appointed to dwell among the *Spirits of the Just made perfect*, who were all released in their several Seasons from the Body of Flesh and Sin. Maladies and Infirmities of every kind are buried in the Grave, and cease for ever ; and if we survey the Properties of the new-raised Body in the great Resurrection-Day, as described 1 *Cor.* xv. we shall find no room for Pain there, no Avenue or Residence for Smart or Anguish. It will not be such a Body of Flesh and Blood which can be a Source of Maladies, or subject to outward Injuries ; but by its own Principles of innate Vigour and Immortality, as well as by the Power and Mercy of God, it shall be forever secured from those uneasy Sensations which made our Flesh on Earth painful and burdensome, and which tended toward Dissolution and Death. 'Tis such a Body as our Lord *Jesus* wore at his Ascent to Heaven in a bright Cloud, for ever incorruptible : *for Flesh and Blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, neither doth Corruption inherit Incorruption.* As we have borne the Image of the earthly Adam in the Frailties and Sufferings that belong to it, so shall we also bear the Image of the Heavenly, even the Lord *Jesus Christ*, who shall change our vile Body, that it may be fashion'd like unto his own glorious Body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself, *Phil.* iii. 21. *We shall hunger no more, we shall thirst no more, nor shall the Sun light on us with its parching Beams, nor shall we be annoyed with Fire or Frost, with Heat or Cold, in those temperate and happy Regions. The Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne shall feed his* People

People for ever there *with the Fruits of the Tree of Life*, and with unknown Entertainments suited to a glorify'd State. *He shall lead them to living Fountains of Waters, and God shall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes.*

Thus have I set before you *the Practical Lessons* which Pain is design'd to teach us in our present State ; and we find that a Body subject to Maladies and Pains, is a well appointed School, wherein our great Master gives us these divine Instructions, and trains us up by degrees for the heavenly World. 'Tis rough Discipline indeed for the Flesh, but it is wholesome for the Soul : And there is many a Christian here on Earth that have been made to confess, they had never learnt the Practice of some of these Virtues, if they had not been taught by such sort of Discipline. Pain, which was brought into human Nature at first by Sin is happily suited by the Providence of God to such a State of Probation, wherein Creatures born in the midst of Sins and Sorrows are by degrees recover'd to the Love of God and Holiness, and fitted for a World of Peace and Joy.

But when we have done with this World, and departed from the Tribes of mortal Men, and from all the Scenes of Allurement and Temptation, there is no more need that *such Lessons* should be taught us in *Heaven*, nor any painful Scourge made use of by the Father of Spirits, to carry on or to maintain the divine Work of Holiness and Grace within us. Let us survey this Matter according to the foregoing Particulars.

Is it possible that while the Blessed above are surrounded with endless Satisfactions flowing from the Throne of God and the Lamb, they should *forget their Benefactor*, and *neglect his Praises* ? Is it possible they should dwell in immortal Health and Ease without Interruption, under the constant vital Influences of the King of Glory, and yet want Gratitude to the Spring of all their Blessings ?

Nor is there any need for the Inhabitants of a World, where no Pains nor Sorrows are found, *to learn Compassion and Sympathy to those who suffer*, for there are no Sufferers there : But Love and Joy, intense and intimate Love, and a Harmony of Joy runs thro' all that blessed Company, and unites them in an universal Sympathy, if I may so express it, or blissful Sensation of each other's Happiness. And I might add also, could there be such a thing as Sorrow and Misery

Misery in those Regions, this divine Principle of Love would work sweetly and powerfully towards such Objects in all necessary Compassion.

What if Pain was once made a *Spur to our Duties* in this frail State of Flesh and Blood? What if Pain were design'd as a *Guard against Temptation*, and a *Means to awaken our Watch* against new Transgression and Guilt? But in a Climate where all is Holiness, and all is Peace, in the full Enjoyment of the Great God, and secur'd by that everlasting Covenant which was sealed by the Blood of the Lamb, there is no more danger of sinning. The Soul is moulded into the more compleat Likeness of God, by living for ever under the Light of his Countenance, and the warmest Beams of his Love.

What if we had need of the Stings of Pain and Anguish in time past, to *wean us by degrees from this Body*, and from *all sensible Things*, and to make us willing to part with them all at the Call of God? Yet when we arrive at the heavenly World, we shall have no more need of being wean'd from Earth, we shall never look back upon that State of Pain and Frailty with a wishful Eye, being for ever satisfy'd in the Affluence of present Joys.

O glorious and happy State; where Millions of Creatures who have dwelt in Bodies of Sin and Pain, and have been guilty of innumerable Follies and Offences against their Maker, yet they are all forgiven, *their Robes are washed and made white in the Blood of Jesus*, their Iniquities are cancell'd for ever, and there shall not be one Stroke more from the Hand of God to chasten them, nor one more Sensation of Pain to punish them. Divine and illustrious Privilege, indeed, and a glorious World, where compleat Sanctification of all the Powers of Nature shall for ever secure us from new Sins, and where the Springs and Causes of Pain shall for ever cease, both within us and without us. Our glorify'd Bodies shall have no Avenue for Pain to enter; the Gates of Heaven shall admit no Enemy to afflict or hurt us; God is our everlasting Friend, and our Souls shall be satisfy'd with the *Rivers of Pleasure which flow for ever at the right Hand of God*. Amen.

DISCOURSE X.

The First Fruits of the Spirit, or the Fore-taste of Heaven.

Rom. viii. 23.

And not only they, but ourselves also who have the First Fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the Adoption, that is, the Redemption of the Body.

SECTION I.

IT is by a beautiful Figure of Speech the Apostle had been describing, in the foregoing Verses, the unnatural Abuse which the Creatures suffer thro' the Sins of Men, when they are employ'd to sinful Purposes and the Dishonour of God their Creator. Permit me to read the Words and represent the Sense of them in a short Paraphrase. *ver. 22. We know that the whole Creation groaneth and travaileth in Pain together until now.* The *Earth* itself may be represented as *groaning* to bear such Loads of Iniquity, such a Multitude of wicked Men who abuse the Creatures of God to the Dishonour of him that made them: The *Air* may be said to *groan* to give Breath to those vile Wretches who abuse it in Filthiness and foolish Talking, to the Dishonour of God, and to the Scandal of their Neighbours; it *groans* to furnish Men with Breath that is abused in Idolatry by the false Worship of the true God, or the Worship of Creatures which is abominable in his Sight: The *Sun* itself may be said to *groan* to give Light to those Sinners who abuse both Day-Light and Darkness in Rioting and Wantonness, in doing Mischief among Men and committing fresh Iniquities against their Maker: The *Moon and Stars* are abused by Adulterers and Thieves, and other midnight Sinners, when they any way afford Light enough to them to guide them in their Pursuit of wicked Ways and Practises. The *Beasts of Burthen* may be said also to *groan* and be abused, when they bear the wicked Sons and Daughters of *Adam* to the Accomplishment of their Iniquities: and even all the Parts of the *brutal* World, as well as of the *inanimate*

inanimate Creation, are some way or other made to serve the detestable and wicked Purposes of the sinful Children of Men, and may be figuratively said to *groan* on this Account. And if we have tasted of the Fruits of the Spirit of Grace, we cannot but in some measure groan with the rest of the Creation in Expectation of the blessed Day, when the Creatures shall be delivered from this Bondage of Corruption, to which the Providence of God has suffered them to be subjected in this degenerate State of Things.

We hope there is a time coming, when the Creatures themselves shall be used according to the original Appointment of their Maker, agreeable to their own first Design, and for the Good of their Fellow-Creatures, and supremely for the Honour of their God, *in that Day when Holiness to the Lord shall be written upon the Bells of the Horses; and every Pot in Jerusalem shall be Holiness unto the Lord of Hosts.* Why should we not join then with the whole Creation in *groaning* and longing after this promised Time, when all the Works of God shall be restor'd to their rightful Use, and the Glory of the Maker shall some way or other be made to shine in every one of them?

The Apostle then adds, in the Words of my Text, *and not these Creatures only, but ourselves also who have the first Fruits of the Spirit,* we who are fill'd with the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit, and eminently the *first Fruits* hereof appear in our Taste and Relish of the divine Provisions that God has given us here in this World to prepare for a better; and even bestows upon some of his Christian Servants these first Fruits of the Tree of Paradise, these Blessings and these Foretastes which are near akin to those of the upper World, when the Saints shall be raised from the Dead, when their Adoption shall be clearly manifested, and they shall look like the Children of God, and their Bodies and all their natural Powers shall be redeemed from those Disorders, whether of Sin or Sorrow, and from all the Springs and Seeds of them, which they are more or less liable to feel in the present State.

Here let it be observed, that the *first Fruits* of any Field, or Plant, or Tree, are of the same Kind with the full Product or the Harvest: therefore it is plain, that the first Fruits of the Spirit in this place cannot chiefly signify the Gifts of the Spirit, such as the Gifts of Tongues, or of

Healing,

Healing, or of Miracles, nor the Gifts of Prophecy, Preaching, or Praying, because these are not the Employments nor the Enjoyments of Heaven. The *first Fruits of the Spirit* must rather refer therefore to the Knowledge and Holiness, the Graces and the Joys which are more perfect and glorious in the heavenly State, than they were ever design'd to be here upon Earth. Now these first Fruits of Graces and Joys are sometimes bestow'd upon Christians in this World, in such a degree as brings them near to the heavenly State: and that is the chief *Observation* I design to draw from these Words; (viz.) *That God has been pleased to give some of his Children here on Earth several of the Foretastes of the heavenly Blessedness, the Graces and the Joys of the upper World;* as they are the first Fruits of that Paradise to which we are travelling: and these Privileges have brought some of the Saints within the Verge of the Courts of Heaven, within the Confines and Borders of the celestial Country. What these are I shall shew immediately; but before I represent them I desire to lay down these few Cautions.

CAUTION I. *These sensible Foretastes of Heaven do not belong to all Christians; these are not such general Blessings of the Covenant of Grace, of which every Christian is made Partaker;* but they are special Favours now and then bestow'd on some particular Persons by the special Will of God. (1.) Such as are more eminent in Faith, and Holiness, and Prayer than others are, such as have made great Advancements in every Part of Religion in Mortification to the World, in Spiritual-mindedness, in Humility, and in much Converse with God, &c. Or, (2.) Sometimes these first Fruits may be given unto such as are weak both in Reason and in Faith, and may be Babes in *Christ*, and are not able by their reasoning Powers to search out their Evidences for Heaven, especially under some present Temptation or Darkness. Or, (3.) Sometimes to those who are called by Providence to go thro' huge and uncommon Trials and Sufferings, in order to support their Spirits, and bear up their Courage, their Faith and Patience.

'Tis true, the more general and common way whereby God prepares his People for Heaven, is by leading them thro' several Steps of advancing Holiness, sincere Repentance, Mortification of Sin, Weanedness from the World,

Likeness to God, heavenly Mindedness, &c. These are indeed the usual Preparatives for Glory, and the surest Evidences of a State of Grace. Therefore let not any Person imagine he is not a true Christian, because he hath not enjoy'd these special Favours and signal Manifestations.

CAUTION 2. *If there be any who have been favour'd with these peculiar Blessings, they must not expect them to be constant and perpetual, nor always to be given in the same Manner or same Measure; they are rare Blessings and special reviving Cordials; they are not the common Food of Christians, nor the daily Nourishment of the Saints. The Word of God, and the Grace of Christ in the Promises is our daily Support, and the constant Nourishment of our Souls. Cordials are not given for our daily Nourishment in the Life of Grace.*

CAUTION 3. *However great and rapturous these Foretastes may be, let us not so depend on them as to neglect the more substantial and solid Evidences for Heaven, and those Steps of Preparation which I have elsewhere mention'd. Let not those who have enjoy'd them give a Loose to their Souls, and let go their Watchfulness, or neglect their daily Mortification and Diligence in every Duty. Some of these divine Raptures have sometimes been so nearly counterfeited by Raptures of Fancy, by warm Self-love, or perhaps by the Deceit of evil Angels, that they are not so safe a Foundation for our Dependance and assured Hope, as the Soul's Experience of a sincere Repentance, and general Turn of Heart to God, and Mortification of Sin, and delight in every Practise of Holiness. The Devil sometimes has transform'd himself into an Angel of Light, 2 Cor. xi. 14. And there have been some who at first hearing of the Gospel have had wondrous Raptures. Heb. vi. 4. 'tis said, they have tasted of the Powers of the World to come, &c. --- who have yet fallen away again, and having lost all their Sense and Savour of divine Things, have become vile Apostates.*

CAUTION 4. *If you seem to enjoy any of these affectionate and rapturous Foretastes of Heaven, be jealous of the Truth of them, if they have not a proportionable sanctifying Influence upon your Souls and your Actions.*

If you find they incline you to Negligence in Duty, to Coldness in the common Practises of Religion and Godliness, if they make you fancy that common Ordinances are a low and

and needless Dispensation, if they seem to excuse you from Diligence in the common Duties of Life towards Man, or Religion towards God, there is great reason then to suspect them: There is danger lest they should be mere Suggestions and deceitful Workings either of your own natural Passions, or the crafty Snares of the artful and busy Adversary of Souls, on purpose to make you neglect solid Religion, and make you part with what is substantial for a bright and flashy Glimpse of heavenly Things.

But, on the other Hand, if you find that these special Favours and Enjoyments raise your Hearts to a greater Nearness to God, and more constant Converse with him; if they keep you deep in Humility, and in everlasting Dependence on the Grace of *Christ* in the Gospel, and warm and zealous Attendance on the Ordinances of Worship; if they teach and incline you to fulfil every Duty of Love to your Neighbour, and particularly to your Fellow-Christians, then they appear to be the *Fruits of the Spirit*; and as they fit you for every Duty and every Providence here upon Earth, there is very good reason to hope they are real Visits from Heaven, and are sent from the God of all Grace to make your more meet for the heavenly Glory.

SECTION II.

These are the four *Cautions*. I proceed now to describe some of these *Foretastes of the heavenly Blessedness*, and shew how nearly they resemble the Blessedness and Enjoyments of the heavenly World.

First, In Heaven there is a near View of God in his Glories; with such a fixed Contemplation of his several Perfections, as draws out the Heart into all correspondent Exercises, in an uncommon, transcendent, and supreme Degree. 'Tis described as one of the Felicities of Heaven, that we shall see God. Matth. v. 8. that we shall behold him Face to Face, and not in Shadows and Glasses, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Let us exhibit some Particulars of this kind, and dwell a little upon them in the most easy and natural Method.

1. In Heaven the blessed Inhabitants behold the Majesty and Greatness of God in such a light as fixes their Thoughts in glorious Wonder and the humblest Adoration, and exalts them to the highest Pleasure and Praise. Have you never fallen into such a devout and fixed Contemplation of the Majesty of God, as to be even astonished at his Glory and Greatness,

Greatness, and to have your Souls so swallow'd up in this Sight, that all the Sorrows and the Joys of this Life, all the Businesses and Necessities of it have been forgotten for a Season, all things below and beneath God have seem'd as nothing in your Eyes? All the Grandeurs and Splendors of Mortality have been buried in Darkness and Oblivion, and Creatures have, as it were, vanished from the Thoughts and been lost, as the Stars die and vanish at the rising Sun and are no more seen? Have you never seen the Face of God in his sublime Grandeur, Excellence, and Majesty so as to shrink into the Dust before him, and lie low at his Foot with humblest Adoration? And you have been transported into a feeling Acknowledgement of your own Nothingness in the Presence of God. Such a Sight the Prophet *Isaiah* seems to have enjoy'd, *Is. lx. 12, 15, 17. Behold the Nations before him are as the Drop of the Bucket, and as the small Dust of the Balance, he taketh up the Isles as a very little thing. All Nations before him are as nothing, they are counted to him less than nothing and Vanity.*

When the Lips are not only directed to speak this sublime Language, but the Soul, as it were, beholds God in these Heights of transcendent Majesty, it is overwhelmed with blessed Wonder and surprising Delight, even while it adores in most profound Lowliness and Self-Abasement. This is the Emblem of the Worship of the heavenly World, see *Rev. iv. 10.* where the Elders, Saints and Prophets, Martyrs, Angels, and Dominions, and Principalities of the highest Degree cast down their Crowns at the Foot of him that made them, and exalt God in his Supremacy over all.

2. In Heaven there are such blessed and extensive Surveys of the *infinite Knowledge of God*, and his amazing *Wisdom* discover'd in his Works, as makes even all their own heavenly Improvements in Knowledge and Understanding to appear as mere Ignorance, Darkness, and Folly before him. In such an Hour as this is the holy *Angels* may charge themselves with *Folly* in his Sight, as he beholds them in the Imperfection of their Understanding. Now have you never been carried away in your Meditations of the all-comprehensive Knowledge of God to such a degree, as to lose and abandon all your former Pride and Appearances of Knowledge and Wisdom in all the native and acquired Riches of it, and count them all as nothing in his Sight? Have you never
looked

looked upward to the midnight Skies, and with Amazement sent your Thoughts upward to him who *calls all the Stars by their Names*, and brings them forth in all their sparkling Glories, who marshals them in their nightly Ranks and Orders, and then stood overwhelmed with sacred Astonishment at the Wisdom which made and ranged them all in their proper Situations, and there appointed them to fullfil ten thousand useful Purposes, and that not only towards this little Ball of Earth, but to a Multitude of upper planetary Worlds? Have you never enquired into the Wonders of his Wisdom in framing the Bodies, the Limbs, and the Senses of Millions of Animals, Birds, and Beasts, Fishes, and Insects, as well as Men all around this Globe, and who hath framed all their Organs and Powers of Nature with exquisite Skill, to see and hear, to run and fly, and swim, to produce their Young in all their proper Forms and Sizes, furnished with their various Powers, and to feed and nourish them in their innumerable Shapes and Colours, admirable for Strength and Beauty? And have you not felt your Souls filled with devout Adoration at the unspeakable and infinite Contrivances of a God?

And not only his *Works of Creation*, but of his *Providence* too have afforded some pious Souls such devout Amazement. What astonishing Wisdom must that be which has created Mankind on Earth near six thousand Years ago, and by his divine Word in every Age continues to create them or give them Being, with all the same natural Powers and Parts, Beauties and Excellencies! That he hath wisely governed so many Millions of Animals with living Souls or Spirits in them, so many Millions of intelligent Creatures, indued with a free Will of their own to chuse or refuse what they will or will not do, and hath managed this innumerable Company of Beings in all Ages, notwithstanding all their different and clashing Opinions and Customs, their crossing Humours, Wills and Passions in endless Variety, and yet hath made them all subservient to his own comprehensive Designs and Purposes thro' all Ages of the World and all Nations on Earth! What unconceiveable *Wisdom* is that which hath effectually appointed them all to center in the Accomplishment of his own eternal Counsels! and with what overwhelming Amazement will this Scene appear, when he shall shut up the Theatre of this Earth

and fold up these Heavens as a Curtain, and this visible Structure of Things shall be laid in Athes? What an astonishing View must this be of the all-surveying *Knowledge*, all-comprehending *Wisdom* of a God, and with what holy and humble Pleasure must the pious Soul be filled who takes in and enjoys this Scene of infinite Varieties and Wonders? How near doth such an Hour approach to the Bliss of Heaven and the Raptures of Contemplation, which belong to the blessed Inhabitants of it?

3. I might add something of the *Almighty Power* of God in his Creation and Government of the World, in his Kingdoms of *Nature* and *Providence*. Did not the Angels rejoice at the Birth-Day of this Universe, and *those Morning Stars shout for Joy* at the first Appearance of this *Creation*? And what the Inhabitants of Heaven make their Song, may not a holy Soul be entertain'd with it, even to Extacy and Rapture? I behold, says he, in divine Meditation, I behold this huge Structure of the Universe rising out of nothing at the Voice of his Command; I behold the several Planets in their various Orders set a moving by the same Word of Power. With what delightful Surprise do I hear him pronouncing the Words, *Let there be Light*, and, lo *the Light appears*? Let there be Earth and Seas; let there be Clouds and Heavens; let there be Sun, Moon, and Stars, and lo the Heavens, and the dry Land, and the Waters appear, the Clouds and the Stars in their various Order and Situation, and all the Parts of the Creation arise, all replenished with proper Ornaments and Animals according to his Word. At his Command Nature exists in all its Regions with all its Furniture; the Beasts, and Birds, and Fishes in all their Forms arise, and at once they obey the several almighty Orders he gave, and by the unknown and unconceivable Force of such a Word they leap out into Existence in ten thousand Forms.

Again, what divine Pleasure is it to hear a God beginning the Work of his Providence, and speaking those wondrous Words of Power to every Plant and Animal, *be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the Earth*, and lo in a long Succession of near six thousand Years the Earth has been cover'd all over with Herbs and Plants, with Shrubs and tall Trees in all their Beauty and Dimensions. The Air hath been filled with Birds and Insects, the Seas and Rivers with Fish, and
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the dry Land with Beasts and Men even to this present Day. When all this Philosophy is changed into Devotion, it must also be transformed into divine and unutterable Joy.

Nor are these things too low and mean for the Contemplation of heavenly Beings: for God is seen in all of them: there is not a Spire of Grass but the Power and Wisdom of a God are visible therein. And it is certain the heavenly Beings must be sometimes employ'd in the Contemplation of many of these lower Wonders. The Plants and Beasts in desolate Regions where no Man inhabits, and in distant and foreign Oceans and Rivers, where the fishy Shoals in all their Variety and Numbers, in all their Successions and Generations for near six thousand Years were never seen nor known by any of the Sons of Men; these seem to have been created in vain, if no heavenly Beings are acquainted with them, nor raise a Revenue of Glory to him that made them.

This *Almighty* Power therefore which made this huge Universe, which sustains the Frame of it every Moment, and secures it from dissolving, this Power which brings forth the Stars in their Order, and Worms and creeping Things in their innumerable Millions, and governs all the Motions of them to the Purposes of divine Glory, must needs affect a contemplative Soul with Raptures of pleasing Meditation; and in these sublime Meditations, by the Aids of the divine Spirit, a Soul on Earth may get near to Heaven. And with what religious and unknown Pleasure at such a Season doth it shrink its own Being as it were into an Atom, and lie in the Dust and adore!

4. The *All-sufficiency of the great God to form and to supply every Creature with all that it can want or desire* is another Perfection of the divine Nature, which is better known in Heaven than it ever was here on Earth, and affords another Scene of Astonishment and sacred Delight: and there may be some Advances towards this Pleasure found among Saints below, some first Fruits of this heavenly Felicity and Joy in the All-sufficiency of God.

My whole self, Body and Mind, is from God and from him alone. All my Limbs and Powers of Flesh and Spirit were derived from him, and borrow'd their first Existence from their original Pattern in his fruitful Mind. All that I have of Life or Comfort, of Breath, of Being, with all my

Blessings round about me, is owing to his boundless and eternal Fulness; and all my long reaching Hopes and endless Expectations that stretch far into Futurity, and an eternal World, are growing out of the same all-sufficient Fulness.

But what do I think or speak of so little a trifle as I am? Stretch thy Thoughts, O my Soul, thro' the Lengths, and Breadths, and Depths of his Creation, O what an unconceivable Fulness of Being, Glory, and Excellency is found in God the universal Parent and Spring of all! What an inexhaustible Ocean of Being and Life, of Perfection and Blessedness must our God be, who supplies all the infinite Armies of his Creatures in all his known and unknown Dominions with Life and Motion, with Breath and Activity, with Food and Support, with Satisfaction and Delight! Who maintains the vital Powers and Faculties of all the Spirits which he hath made in all the visible and invisible Worlds, in all his Territories of Light, and Peace and Joy, and in all the Regions of Darkness, Punishment and Misery! In him all Things live, and move, and have their Being, Acts xvii. 28. Psal. civ. 29. *He withdraws his Breath and they die.* He hath writ down all their Names in his own Mind, he gives them all their Natures, and without him there is nothing, there can be nothing; all Nature without him would have been a perpetual Blank, an universal Emptiness, an everlasting Void, and with one Turn of his Will he could sink and dissolve all Nature into its original Nothing.

Confess, O my Soul, thy own Nothingness in his Presence, and with astonishing Pleasure and Worship adore his Fulness: he is thy everlasting All. Be thy Dependance ever fixed upon him; thou canst not, thou shalt not live a Moment without him, without this habitual Dependance, and a frequent delightful Acknowledgement of it. Such a devout Frame as this is Heaven, and such Scenes now and then passing thro' the Soul are Glimpses of the heavenly Blessedness.

SECTION III.

Though the *Eternity* and *Immensity* of God might perhaps in their own Nature, and in the reason of things, be first mention'd, yet his *Majesty*, his *Power*, and his *Wisdom* in their sovereign Excellency strike the Souls of Creatures more immediately, therefore I have put these first. However, let us now consider the *Eternity* of the great God and his

Cmnipresence,

Omnipresence, and think how the Spirits in Heaven are affected therewith, and what kindred Meditations may be derived from these Perfections by the Saints here on Earth. I proceed therefore,

5. To the *Eternity* of God: which tho' the most exalted Spirit in Heaven cannot comprehend, yet 'tis probable they have some nearer and clearer Discovery of it than we can have here in this mortal State, while we dwell in Flesh and Blood. We have nothing in this visible World that gives us so much as an Example or Similitude of it. The great God *who is, who was, and who is to come thro' all Ages, he is, and was, and for ever will be the same.* Let us go back as many thousand Ages as we can in our Thoughts, and still an eternal God was before them; a Being that had no Beginning of his Existence, nor will have any End of his Life or Duration. And as he says to *Moses, My Name is I AM THAT I AM*, so as there is nothing which had any Hand in his Being, but all the Reasons of it are derived from his own Self-fulness, therefore we may say of him that *he is because he is, and because he will be*: He had no Spring of his first Beginning, nor any Cause of his continued Existence, but what is within himself. We can never set ourselves in too mean a Light when an eternal God is near us; and every thing besides God can be but little in our Eyes.

And, O my thinking Powers, are ye not sweetly lost in this holy Rapture, and overpower'd with divine Pleasure, O my Soul in such Meditation as this? Art thou not delightfully surprized with the Thoughts of such Self-sufficiency and such an unconceivable Perfection? Thy Being consider'd as here in this Life, is not so much in the Sight of God as an Atom in comparison of the whole Earth; and even the supposed future Ages of thy Existence in the eternal State are unconceivably short, when compared with the Glory of that Being that never began his Life or his Duration.

Many things here on Earth concur towards my Satisfaction and Peace, but if I have God my Friend, I have all in him that I can possibly want or desire. Let me then live no longer upon Creatures when God is All.

Let Sun, Moon, and Stars vanish, and all this visible Creation disappear and be for ever annihilated if God please, he himself is still my eternal Hope and never-failing Spring of

of all my Blessedness : My Expectations are continually safe in his Hands, and shall never fail while I am so near to him. This is *Joy unspeakable*, and akin to *Glory*.

6. Let us meditate also on the *Immensify* of God, which I think is much better expressed by his Omnipresence. God is wheresoever any Creature is or can be ; knowing immediately by his own Presence all that belongs to them, all that they are or can be, all that they do or can do, all that concerns them, whether their Sins or their Virtues, their Pains or their Pleasures, their Hopes or their Fears. It implies also that he doth by his immediate Power and Influence support and govern all the Creatures. In short, this *Immensify* is nothing else but the infinite Extent of his Knowledge and his Power, and it reaches to and beyond all Places as Eternity reaches to and beyond all Time. This the Blessed above know and rejoice in, and take infinite Satisfaction wherein : having God as it were surrounding them on all sides, so that they cannot be where he is not, he is ever present with his *All-sufficiency* ready to bestow on them all they wish or desire while he continues their God, *i. e.* for ever and ever. They are under the Blessing of his Eye, and the Care of his Hand, to guard them from every Evil, and to secure their Peace.

Let thy Flesh or Spirit be surrounded with never so many thousand Dangers or Enemies, they cannot do thee the least Damage without his leave by Force or by Surprise while such an almighty Being is all around thee : nor hast thou reason to indulge any Fear while the Spring and Ocean of all Life, Activity, and Blessedness thus secures thee on every Side. If thou hast the Evidences of his Children on thee, thou possessest an eternal Security of thy Peace.

7. *The Sovereignty and Dominion* of the blessed God is a further Meditation and Pleasure which becomes and adorns the Inhabitants of the heavenly World. There he reigns upon the Throne of his Glory, and the greater Part of the Territories which are subject to him are less in their View than our scanty Powers of Nature or Perception can now apprehend, and a proportionable Degree of Pleasure is found with the Saints above in these Contemplations.

But in our present State of Mortality our Souls can only look through these Lattices of Flesh and Blood, and make a few scanty and imperfect Inferences from what they always see,

see, and hear, and feel : and yet the glorious Sovereignty and Dominion of the blessed God may so penetrate the Soul with a divine Sense of it here on Earth, as to raise up a Heaven of Wonder and Joy within.

Adore him, O my Soul, who surveys and rules all things which he has made with an absolute Authority, and is for ever uncontrollable. How righteous a Thing is it that he should give Laws to all the Beings which his Hand hath formed, which his Breath hath spoken into Life, and especially that Rank which his Favour hath furnished with Immortality ? How just that he should be obey'd by every Creature without the least Reluctance or Reserve, without a Moment's Delay, and that to all the Length of their Existence ?

Submit to his Government with Pleasure, O my Nature, and be all ye my Powers of Soul and Body in everlasting Readiness to do whatsoever he requires, and to be whatsoever he appoints. Wilt thou have me, O Lord, lie under Sickness or Pain, wilt thou have me languish under Weakness and Confinement ? I am at thy Foot, I am for ever at thy Disposal. Wilt thou have me active and vigorous in thy Service ? Lord, I am ready with utmost Chearfulness. Wilt thou confine me to painful Idleness and long Patience ? Lord here I am, do with me what seemeth good unto thee. I am ready to serve thy Purposes here, or thy Orders in the unknown World of Spirits when thou shalt dissolve this mortal Frame : I lay down these Limbs in the Dust of Death at thy Command : I venture into the Regions of Angels and unbodied Minds at thy Summons. I will be what thou wilt, I will go when thou wilt, I will dwell where thou wilt, for thou art always with me, and I am intirely thine. I both rejoice and tremble at thy Sovereignty and Dominion over all. God cannot do injury to a Creature who is so intirely his own Property ; God will not deal unkindly with a Creature who is so sensible of his just Dominion and Supremacy, and which bows at the Foot of his Sovereignty with so much relish of satisfaction.

8. Let us next take notice of the *perfect Purity* of the Nature of God, his *universal Holiness*, the *Reditude* of the divine Nature manifested in all his Thoughts, his Works, and his Words, all perfectly agreeable to the eternal Rules of Truth and Righteousness, and at the furthest Distance from every

every thing that is false and faulty, every thing that is or can be dishonourable to so glorious a Being. Have we never seen God in this light, in the Glory of his Holiness, his universal Rectitude, and the everlasting Harmony of all his Perfections in exact Correspondence with all the Notions we can have of Truth and Reason? And has not God appear'd then as a glorious and lovely Being? And have we not at the same time beheld ourselves as unclean and unholy Creatures, in one part or other of our Natures ever ready to jar or fall out with some of the most pure and perfect Rules of Holiness, Justice or Truth? Have we not seen all our Sins and Iniquities in this light, with utmost Abhorrence and highest Hatred of them, and looked down upon ourselves with a deep and overwhelming Sense of Shame and Displacence against our depraved and corrupted Natures, and abased ourselves as *Job* does in Dust and Ashes, and not daring to open our Mouths before him? *Job* xlii. 6. *I have heard of thee by the Hearing of the Ear, but now mine Eye seeth thee, and I abhor myself in Dust and Ashes.* The least Spot or Blemish of Sin grows highly offensive and painful to the Eyes of a Saint in this Situation.

Every little warping from Truth in our Conversation, every degree of Insincerity or Fraud becomes a smarting Uneasiness to the Mind in Remembrance of our past Follies in the present State. There is the highest Abhorrence of Sin among all the heavenly Inhabitants, and this Sight of God in the Beauties of his *Holiness*, and his perfect *Rectitude*, is an everlasting Preservative to holy Souls against the Admission of an impure or unholy Thought; and therefore some Divines have supposed, that the Angels at their first Creation were put into a State of Trial before they were admitted to this full Sight of the Beauty of God in his Holiness, which would have secured them from the least Thought or Step towards Apostacy.

O my Soul, of what happy Importance is it to thee to maintain, as long as possible, this Sense of the *Purity*, *Rectitude*, and *Perfection* of the Nature of the blessed God, who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity, with the least regard of Approbation or Allowance? And what infinite Condescension is it in such a God to find out and appoint a way of Grace, whereby such shameful polluted Creatures as we are should ever be admitted into his Presence to make the least

least Address to his Majesty, or to hope for his Favour ?

Besides, in this sublime View of the *Holiness* of God, we shall not only love God better than ever, as we see him more amiable under this View of his glorious Attributes, but we shall grow more sincere and fervent in our Love to all that is holy, to every Fellow-Christian, to every Saint in Heaven and on Earth : We shall not bear any Estrangedness or Alienation from those who have so much of the Likeness of God in them. They will ever appear to be the *Excellent of the Earth, in whom is all our Delight* : Their supposed Blemishes will vanish at the Thought of their Likeness to God in Holiness : And especially our blessed Lord *Jesus*, the Son of God, will be most precious and all-glorious in our Eyes, as he is the most perfect Image of his Father's Holiness. There is nothing in the blessed God, but the Man *Christ Jesus* bears a proportionable Resemblance to it, as far as a Creature can resemble God, and he will consequently be highest in our Esteem under God the Lord and Father of all.

9. The ever-pleasing Attribute of divine *Goodness and Love* is another endless and joyful Theme or Object of the Contemplation of the heavenly World. There this Perfection shines in its brightest Rays, there it displays its most triumphant Glories, and kindles a Flame of everlasting Joy in all the Sons of Blessedness.

But we in this World may have such Glimpses of this *Goodness and Love* as may fill the Soul with unspeakable Pleasure, and begin in it the first Fruits and Earnest of Heaven. When we survey the inexhaustable Ocean of *Goodness* which is in God, which fills and supplies all the Creatures with every thing they stand in need of ; when we behold all the Tribes of the Sons of Men supported by his boundless Sufficiency, his Bounty and kind Providence, and refreshed with a thousand Comforts beyond what the mere Necessities of Nature require. In such an Hour if we feel the least Flowings of Goodness in ourselves towards others, we shall humble ourselves to the Dust, and cry out in holy Amazement, Lord, what is an Atom to a Mountain ? What is a Drop to a River, a Sea of Beneficence ? What is a Shadow to the eternal Substance ? What good thing is there in Time or in Eternity, which I can possibly want which is not abundantly supplied out of thine overflowing Fulness ?

Hence

Hence arises the eternal Satisfaction of all the holy and happy Creation in being so near to thee, and under the everlasting Assurances of thy Love. I can do nothing but fall down before thee in deepest Humility, and admire, adore, and everlastingly love thee, who hast assumed to thyself the Name of Love. 1 *John* iv. 8. *God is Love.*

SECTION IV.

Thus far our Joys may rise into an Imitation of the Joys above in the devout *Contemplation of divine Perfections.*

And not only the *Perfections of God* consider'd and survey'd single in themselves, but the *Union* and blessed *Harmony* of many of them in the divine Works and Transactions of Providence and of Grace, especially in the Gospel of *Christ*, administer further Matter for Contemplation and Pleasure among the happy Spirits in Heaven : And so far as this Enjoyment may be communicated to the Saints here on Earth, they may be also said to have a Foretaste of the Business and Pleasure of Heaven. Let us take notice of this Harmony in several Instances.

1. In the sacred Constitution of the Person of our Lord *Jesus Christ* as God and Man united in one personal Agent : Here *Majesty* and *Mercy* give a glorious Instance of their Union, here all the Grandeur and Dignity of Godhead condescends to join itself in union with a Creature, such as Man is, a Spirit dwelling in Flesh and Blood. 1 *Tim.* ii. 5. *There is one God, and one Mediator between God and Man, even the Man Christ Jesus :* But this Man is personally united to the blessed God, he is *God manifest in the Flesh :* He is a Man in whom dwells all the Fulness of the God-head bodily, to constitute one all-sufficient Saviour of miserable and fallen Mankind : What an amazing Stoop or Condescension is this for the eternal Godhead thus to join itself to a Creature, and what a surprizing Exaltation is this of the Creature for the Man *Christ Jesus* thus to be assumed into so near a Relation to the blessed God ? All the Glories that result from this divine Contrivance and Transaction are not to be renumerated in Paper, nor by the best Capacity of Writers here on Earth : The heavenly Inhabitants are much better acquainted with them.

Again, here is an Example of the Harmony and Co-operation of unsearchable *Wisdom* and all-commanding *Power* in the Person of the blessed *Jesus* ; and what a happy Design

is hereby executed, namely, the Reconciliation of sinful Man and the holy and glorious God : and who could do this but one who was possessed of such Wisdom and such Power ? When there was no Creature in Heaven or Earth sufficient for this Work, God was pleased to appoint such a Union between a Creature and the Creator, between God and Man, as might answer all the unconceivable Purposes concealed in his Thought. If there be wanting a Person fit to execute any of his infinite Designs, he will not be frustrated for want of an Agent, he will appoint God and Man to be so nearly united as to become one Agent to execute this Design.

2. *In the Manner of our Salvation, (viz.) by an Atonement for Sin.* The great God did not think it proper, nor agreeable to his sublime Holiness, to receive sinful Man into his Favour without an Atonement for Sin, and a Satisfaction made to the Governor of the World for the Abuse and Violation of his holy Law here on Earth ; and therefore he appointed such a Sacrifice of Atonement as might be sufficient to do complete Honour to the Lawgiver, as well as to save and deliver the Offender from Death : Therefore Jesus was made a Man capable of suffering and dying, that he might honour the Majesty and the Justice of the broken Law of God, and that he might do it compleatly by the Union of God-head to this Man and Mediator ; the Dignity of whose Divinity diffuses itself over all that he did and all that he suffer'd, so as to make his Obedience compleatly acceptable to God instead of thousands of Creatures, and fully satisfactory for the Offence that was given him by them ; here is a Sacrifice provided equal to the Guilt of Sin, and therefore sufficient to take it away.

You see here what a *blessed Harmony* there is between the Justice of God doing honour to his own Law, and his *Compassion* resolved to save a ruin'd Creature : Here is no Blemish cast upon the strict Justice and Righteousness of God, when the Offender is forgiven in such a Method as may do honour to Justice and Mercy at once. Rom. iii. 24, 25. *We are justify'd freely by his Grace thro' the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ ; whom God hath set forth to be a Propitiation thro' Faith in his Blood, to declare his Righteousness, even his perfect governing Justice, tho' he passes by and pardons the Sins of a thousand criminal Creatures ; to declare, I say,*

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at this Time his Righteousness that he might appear to be just to his own Authority and Law, while he justifies the sinful Man who believeth or trusteth in Jesus the Mediator as becoming a proper Sacrifice and Propitiation for Sin.

3. By the *Sanctification of our Nature*. There is also another remarkable Harmony between the Holiness of God and his Mercy in this Work of the Salvation of sinful Man. The Guilt of Sin is not only to be forgiven and taken away by a complete Atonement and Sacrifice, but the sinful Nature of this ruin'd Creature is to be changed into Holiness, is to be renewed and sanctify'd by the blessed Spirit, and reformed into the Image of God his Maker : He must not only be releas'd from Punishment by Forgiveness, but he must be restor'd to the Image of God by sanctifying Grace ; that so he may be fit Company for the rest of the Favourites of God in the upper World ; that he may be qualify'd to be admitted into this Society, where perfect Purity and Holiness are necessary for all the Inhabitants of this upper World, and for such near Attendants on the blessed God : In that happy State nothing shall enter there that defileth, *Rev. xxi. 27.* and therefore concerning the Criminals amongst the *Corinthians*, as vile and as offensive to the pure and holy God as they are represented, *1 Cor. vi. 9---11. (viz.) Fornicators, Idolaters, Adulterers, Drunkards, &c. but, 'tis said, they are washed, but they are sanctify'd, but they are justify'd in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

Now when the Souls of the Saints here on Earth are rais'd to such divine Contemplations, what transporting Satisfaction and Delight must arise from the surprizing Union and Harmony of the Attributes of the blessed God in these his Transactions ? And especially when the Soul in the lively Exercise of Grace and View of its own Pardon, Justification and restored Holiness, looks upon itself as one of these happy Favourites of the Majesty of Heaven : It cries out as it were in holy Amazement, What a divine Profusion is here of Wisdom and Power, Glory and Grace, to save a wretched Worm from everlasting Burnings, and to advance a worthless Rebel to such undeserved and exalted Glories !

SECTION V.

The Wonders of divine Perfections united in the Success of the Gospel, give an Ecstasy of Joy sometimes to holy Souls. Not only do these Views of the united Perfections of God,

as they are concerned in the Contrivance of the Gospel, entertain the Saints above with new and pleasurable Contemplations, but the Wonders of divine *Wisdom, Power, and Grace*, united and harmonizing in the *Propagation and Success of this Gospel*, become a Matter of delightful Attention and Survey to the Saints on high.

This is imitated also in a measure by the Children of God here on Earth. Have you never felt such a surprising Pleasure in the View of the Attributes of God, his Grace, Wisdom and Power in making these divine Designs so happily efficacious for the good of thousands of Souls? If there be joy in Heaven among the Angels of God at the Conversion of a Sinner, what perpetual Messages of unknown Satisfaction and Delight did the daily and constant Labours of the blessed Apostle Paul send to the upper World? What perpetual Tidings were carried to the Worlds on high of such and such Souls, converted unto God from gross Idolatry, from the Worship of dumb Idols, from the vain Superstition of their Heroes and Mediator-Gods, and from the impure and bloody Sacrifices of their own Countrymen, whereby they intended to satisfy their Gods for their own Iniquities, and to reconcile themselves to these invented Gods, these Dæmons or Devils which were deify'd by the Folly and Madnes of sinful Men? What new *Hallelujahs* must it put into the Mouths of the Saints and Angels on high, to see the true and living God worshipped by thousands that had never before known him, and to see Jesus the Mediator in all the Glories of his divine Offices admired and adored by those who lately had either known nothing of him, or been shameful Revilers and Blasphemers of his Majesty?

And what an unknown Delight is diffused thro' many of the Saints of God now here on Earth upon such Tidings, not only from the foreign and *Heathen* Countries, but even some that have profess'd *Christianity*, but under gross Mistakes and miserable Fogs of Darkness and Superstition? What an unconceivable and overwhelming Pleasure has surprized a *Christian* sometimes in the midst of his zealous Worship of God and his Saviour, to hear of such Tidings of new Subjects in multitudes submitting themselves to their divine Dominion?

And even in our day, whensoever we hear of the Work
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of Grace begun by the Ministry of the Word, awakening a drowzy and lethargic Soul from its dangerous Sleep on the Brink of Hell, rousing a negligent and Slothful Creature from his Indolence and Carelessness about the Things of Eternity ; or *again*, in making a Heart soft and impressive to the Powers of divine Grace, which was before hard as the nether Millstone ; and especially when multitudes of these Tidings come together from distant Places, as of late we have heard from *New-England*, and several of those Plantations from *Scotland* and several of her Assemblies, what additional Scenes of heavenly Joy and Pleasure have been raised amongst the pious Souls, both those who relate and those who hear them.

SECTION VI.

Foretastes of Heaven are sometimes derived from the *overflowing Sense of the Love of God* let in upon the Soul.

The Spirits above who are surrounded with this Blessedness and this Love, and rejoice in the everlasting Assurance of it, cannot but be filled with intense Joy. What can be a greater Foundation of complete Blessedness and Delight than the immediate *Sensation and Assurance of being beloved by the glorious, and supreme, and the All-sufficient Being*, who will never suffer his Favourites to want any thing he can bestow upon them to make them happy in Perfection, and for ever ? All Creatures are under his present *View* and immediate Command ; there is not the least of them can give Disturbance to any of the Favourites of Heaven, who dwell in the midst of their Creator's Love ; nor is there any Creature that can be employ'd towards the complete Happiness of the Saints on high, but is for ever under the Disposal of that God who has made all Things, and it shall be employ'd upon every just Occasion for the Display of his Love to his Saints.

Some have imagined that that *perfect Satisfaction of Soul which arises from a good Conscience, speaking peace inwardly in the Survey of its sincere Desire to please God in all things, and having with Uprightness of Heart fulfilled its Duty*, is the supreme delight of Heaven : but 'tis my Opinion God has never made the Felicity of his Creatures to be drawn so intirely out of themselves, or from the Spring of their own Bosom, as this Notion seems to imply. God himself will be *all in all* to his Creatures ; and all their original Springs

of Blessedness as well as Being are in him, and must be derived from him : 'Tis therefore the overflowing Sense of being beloved by a God almighty and eternal, that is the supreme Fountain of Joy and Blessedness to every reasonable Nature, and the endless Security of this Happiness is Joy everlasting in all the Regions of the blessed above.

Now a Taste of this kind is heavenly Blessedness even on this Earth, where God is pleased to bestow it on his Creatures ; and the Glimpses of it bring such Ecstasies into the Soul as can hardly be conceived, or revealed to others, but it is best felt by them who enjoy it.

SECTION VII.

Foretastes of Heaven in the fervent Emotions of Soul in love to Jesus Christ.

What the Love and strong Affections of the blessed Saints above towards *Jesus Christ* their Lord and Saviour may impress of Joy on their Spirits, is not possible for us to learn in the present State ; but there are some who have even here on Earth felt such transcendent Affections to *Jesus* the Son of God, even tho' they have never enjoy'd the Sight of him, yet they love him with most intense and ardent Zeal ; their Devotion almost swallows them up and carries them away Captive above all earthly Things, and brings them near to the heavenly World. There is an unknown Joy which arises from such intense Love to an Object so lovely and so deserving ; such is that which is spoken concerning the Saints to whom *St. Peter* wrote, *1 Pet. i. 8. whom having not seen, ye love, in whom tho' now ye see him not, yet believing ye rejoice with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory.* It is thro' this divine Taste of Love, and Joy, and Glory communicated by the blessed Spirit, revealing the Things of *Christ* to their Souls, that many of the Confessors and Martyrs in the primitive Ages, and in later Times, have not only joyfully parted with all their Possessions and their Comforts in this Life, but have follow'd the Call of God thro' Prisons and Deaths of a most dreadful Kind, through Racks, and Fires, and many Torments, for the sake of the Love of *Jesus* ; and perhaps there may be some in our Day who have had so lively and strong a Sensation of the Love of *Christ* let in upon their Souls, that they could not only becontent to be absent from all their carnal Delights for ever, but even from their intellectual and more spiritual Entertain-

ments, if they might be for ever placed in such a Situation to *Jesus Christ*, as to feel the everlasting Beams of his Love let out upon them, and to rejoice in him with perpetual Delight. As he is the nearest Image of God the Father, they can love nothing beneath God equal to their Love of him, nor Delight in any Thing beneath God equal to their Delight in *Jesus Christ*: Indeed their Love and their Joy are so wrapp'd up in the great and blessed God as he appears in *Christ Jesus*, that they do not usually divide their Affections in this matter, but love God supremely for ever, as revealing himself in his most perfect Love in *Christ Jesus* unto their Souls. How near this may approach to the glorify'd Love of the Saints in Heaven, or what Difference there is between the holy Ones above and the Saints below in this Respect, may be hard to say.

SECTION VIII.

Foretastes of Heaven in the transcendent Love of the Saints to each other. I might here ask some advanced Saints,

Have you never seen or heard of a Fellow-Christian growing into such a near Resemblance to the blessed *Jesus*, in all the Virtues and Graces of the Spirit, that you would willingly part with all the Attainments and Honours that you have already arrived at, which make you never so eminent in the World or in the Church, as to be made so near a Conformist to the Image of the blessed *Jesus* as this Fellow-Christian has seemed to be?

Have you never seen or read of the Glories and Graces of the Son of God exemplify'd in some of the Saints in so high a degree, and at the same time been so divested of Self, and so mortify'd to a narrow Self-love, as to be satisfy'd with the lowest and the meanest Supports of Life, and the meanest Station in the Church of *Christ* here on Earth, if you might but be favour'd to partake of that transcendent Likeness to the holy *Jesus*, as you would fain imitate and possess?

Have you never had a View of all the Virtues and Graces of the Saints, derived from one eternal Fountain the blessed God, and flowing thro' the Mediation of *Jesus* his Son in so glorious a manner, that you have longed for the Day when you shall be amongst them, and receive your Share of this Blessedness? Have you never found yourself so united to them in one Heart and one Soul, that you have
wished

wished them all the same Blessings that you wish'd to yourself, and that without the least Shadow of Grudging or Envy, if every one of them were Partaker as much as you? There is no *Envy* among the heavenly Inhabitants; nor doth St. *Paul* receive the less because *Cephas* or *Apollos* has a large Share. Every Vessel has its Capacity enlarged to a proper Extent by the God of Nature and Grace, and every Vessel is completely filled, and feels itself for ever full and for ever happy: then there cannot be found the Shadow of Envy amongst them.

Now to sum up the View of these things in short; who is there that enjoys these blessed Evidences of an Interest in the Inheritance on high, who is there that has any such Foretastes of the Felicity above, but must join with the whole Creation in groaning for that great Day, when all the Children of God shall appear in the Splendor of their Adoption, and every thing in Nature and Grace among them shall attain the proper End for which it was at first design'd? And whensoever any such Christian hears some of the last Words in the Bible pronounced by our Lord *Jesus*, *surely I come quickly*, he must immediately join the universal Eccho of the Saints with unspeakable Delight, *Even so come, O Lord Jesus*,



DISCOURSE XI.

Safety in the Grave, and Joy at the Resurrection.

Job xiv. 13, 14, 15.

O that thou wouldst hide me in the Grave, that thou wouldst keep me in secret until thy Wrath be past, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time and remember me ! If a Man die shall he live again ? All the Days of my appointed time will I wait till my Change come. Thou shalt call and I will answer thee : thou wilt have a desire to the Work of thy Hands.

BEFORE we attempt to make any Improvement of these Words of *Job* for our present Edification, 'tis necessary that we search out the true Meaning of them. There are two general Senses of these three Verses which are given by some of the most considerable Interpreters of Scripture, and they are exceeding different from each other.

The *first* is this. Some suppose *Job* under the Extremity of his Anguish to long after Death here, as he does in some other Parts of this Book, and to desire that God would cut him off from the Land of the Living, and *hide him in the Grave*, or, at least, take him away from the present Stage of Action, and conceal him in some retired and solitary Place, dark as the Grave is, till all the Days which might be design'd for his Pain and Sorrow were finished : And that God would *appoint him a time* for his Restoration to Health and Happiness again in this World, and raise him to the Possession of it, by *calling him out* of that dark and solitary Place of Retreat ; and then *Job* would *answer* him, and appear with pleasure at such a Call of Providence.

Others give this Sense of the Words, that tho' the pressing and overwhelming Sorrows of this good Man constrain'd him

to long for Death, and he entreated of God that he might be sent to the *Grave as a Hiding-place*, and thus be deliver'd from his present Calamities, yet he had some divine Glimpse of a Resurrection or *living again*, and he hopes for the Happiness of a future State when God should call him out of the Grave. He knew that the blessed God would have a desire to restore the *Work of his own Hands* to Life again, and *Job* would answer the Call of his God into a Resurrection with holy Pleasure and Joy.

Now there are four or five *Reasons* which incline me to prefer this latter Sense of the Words, and to shew that the Comforts and Hope which *Job* aspires to in this place are only to be derived from a Resurrection to final Happiness.

1. The express Words of the Text are, *O that thou wouldst hide me in the Grave!* not in a darksome Place like the Grave; and where the literal Sense of the Words is plain and agreeable to the Context, there is no need of making Metaphors to explain them. There is nothing that can encourage us to suppose that *Job* had any hope of Happiness in this World again, after he was gone down to the Grave, and therefore he would not make so unreasonable a Petition to the great God. This seems to be too foolish and too hopeless a Request for us to put into the Mouth of so wise and good a Man.

2. He seems to limit the Continuance of Man in the State of Death to the Duration of the Heavens, *ψ. 12th, Man lieth down and riseth not till the Heavens be no more*: not absolutely *for ever* does *Job* desire to be hidden in the Grave, but till the Dissolution of all these visible Things, these Heavens and this Earth, and the great Rising-day for the Sons of Men. These Words seem to have a plain Aspect towards the Resurrection.

And especially when he adds, *they shall not be waken'd or raised out of their Sleep*. The Brutes when dying are never said to *sleep* in Scripture, because they shall never rise again; but this is a frequent Word used to signify the Death of *Man* both in the Old Testament and in the New, because he only lies down in the Grave a for Season, as in a Bed of Sleep, in order to awake and arise hereafter.

3. In other places of this Book *Job* gives us some evident Hints of his Hope of a Resurrection, especially that divine Passage and Prophecy, when he spake as one surrounded

with a Vision of Glory, and filled with the Light and the Joy of Faith. *Job xix. 25. I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter Day upon the Earth : and tho' after my Skin Worms destroy this Body, yet in my Flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine Eyes shall behold, and not another, tho' my Reins be consumed within me.* But in many parts of this Book the good Man lets us know, that he had no manner of Hope of any Restoration to Health and Peace in this Life. *Job vii. 6, 7, 8. My days are spent without Hope: mine Eye shall no more see good: the Eye of him that hath seen me shall see me no more: thine Eyes are upon me, and I am not.* Ver. 21. *Now shall I sleep in the Dust, thou shalt seek me in the Morning and I shall not be.* *Job xvii. 15. Where is now my Hope? As for my Hope, who shall see it? He and his Hope seem'd to go down to the Bars of the Pit together, and to Rest in the Dust.* And if *Job* had no hope of a Restoration in this World, then his Hopes must point to the Resurrection of the Dead.

4. If we turn these Verses here, as well as that noble Passage in *Job xix.* to the more evangelical Sense of a Resurrection, the Truths which are contain'd in the one and the other, are all supported by the Language of the New Testament; and the express Words of both these Texts are much more naturally and easily apply'd to the evangelical Sense, without any Strain and Difficulty.

The Expressions in the sixth of *Job*, *I know that my Redeemer liveth*, &c. have been rescued by many wise Interpreters from that poor and low Sense which has been forced upon them, by those who will not allow *Job* to have any Prospect beyond this Life: and it has been made to appear to be a bright Glimpse of divine Light and Joy, a Ray or Vision of the Sun of Righteousness breaking in between the dark Clouds of his pressing Sorrow: And that the Words of my Text demand the same sort of Interpretation, will appear further by these short Remarks, and this Paraphrase upon them.

Job had been speaking, ver. 7, &c. that *there is hope of a Tree when it is cut down that it will sprout again visibly, and bring forth Boughs*; but when *Man gives up the Ghost*, he is no more visible upon Earth: *Where is he?* *Job* does not deny his future Existence, but only intimates that he does not appear in the Place where he was; and in the follow-

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ing Verses he does not say, a dying Man shall never rise, or shall *never be awaken'd out of his Sleep*, but asserts that *he rises not till the Dissolution of these Heavens and these visible Things* : And by calling Death a *Sleep*, he supposes an awaking Time tho' it may be distant and far off.

Then he proceeds to long for Death, *O that thou wouldst hide me in the Grave ! that thou wouldst keep me secret till thy Wrath be past !* till these Times and Seasons of Sorrow be ended, which seems to be the Effect of divine Wrath or Anger : But then I intreat *thou wouldst appoint me a set time* for my tarrying in the Grave, *and remember me* in order to raise me again. Then with a sort of Surprise of Faith and Pleasure he adds, *If a Man die shall he live again ? Shall these dry Bones live ?* And he answers in the Language of Hope : *All the Days of that appointed time of thine, I will wait till that glorious Change shall come. Thou shalt call from Heaven, and I will answer thee from the Dust of Death. I will appear at thy Call and say, Here am I : thou wilt have a desire to the Work of thy Hands, to raise me again from the Dead, whom thou hast made of Clay, and fashion'd me into Life.*

From the Words thus expounded we may draw these several *Observations*, and make a short *Reflection* upon each of them, as we pass along.

Obs. I. This World is a Place wherein good Men are exposed to great Calamities, and they are ready to think the Anger or Wrath of God appears in them.

Obs. II. The Grave is God's known Hiding-place for his People.

Obs. III. God has appointed a set Time in his own Counsels for all his Children to continue in Death.

Obs. IV. The lively View of a happy Resurrection, and a well-grounded Hope of this blessed Change, is a solid and divine Comfort to the Saints of God, under all Trials of every kind both in Life and Death.

Obs. V. The Saints of God who are resting in their Beds of Dust will arise joyfully at the Call of their heavenly Father.

Obs. VI. God takes delight in his Works of Nature, but much more when they are dignify'd and adorned by the Operations of divine Grace.

Obs. VII.

Obj. VII. How much are we indebted to God for the Revelation of the New Testament, which teaches us to find out the Blessings which are contain'd in the Old, and to fetch out the Glories and Treasures which are concealed there ?

Let us dwell a while upon each of these and endeavour to improve them by a particular Application.

Observ. I. *This World is a Place wherein good Men are exposed to great Calamities, and they are ready to think the Anger or Wrath of God appears in them.* This mortal Life and this present State of Things, as surrounded with Crosses and Disappointments, the Loss of our dearest Friends, as well as our own Pains and Sickneses, have so much Anguish and Misery attending them, that they seem to be the Seasons of divine Wrath, and they grieve and pain the Spirit of many a pious Man, under a Sense of the Anger of his God. It must be confess'd in general that Misery is the effect of Sin, for Sin and Sorrow came into the World together. It is granted also, that God sometimes afflicts his People in Anger, and corrects them in his hot Displeasure, when they have sinned against him in a remarkable manner : but this is not always the Case.

The great God was not really angry with *Job* when he suffer'd him to fall into such complicated Distresses ; for it is plain, that while he deliver'd him up into the Hands of *Satan* to be afflicted, he vindicates and honours him with a divine Testimony concerning his Piety. *Job* i. 8. *There is none like him in the Earth, a perfect and an upright Man, one that feareth God and avoideth Evil.* Nor was he angry with his Son *Jesus Christ*, when it pleas'd the Father to bruise him and put him to grief, when he made his Soul an Offering for Sin, and he was stricken, smitten of God and afflicted, *Isa.* liii. To these we may add *Paul* the best of the Apostles, and the greatest of Christians, who was abundant in Labours and Sufferings beyond all the rest. See a dismal Catalogue of his Calamities, *2 Cor.* xi. 23. &c. What Variety of Wretchedness, what terrible Persecutions from Men, what repeated Strokes of Distress came upon him by the Providence of God, which appear'd like the Effects of divine Wrath or Anger ? But they were plainly design'd for more divine and blessed Purposes, both with regard to God, with regard to himself, and to all the succeeding Ages of the Christian Church.

God does not always smite his own People to punish Sin and shew his Anger ; but these Sufferings are often appointed for the *Trial of their Christian Virtues and Graces*, for the Exercise of their Humility and their Patience, for the Proof of their Steadfastness in Religion, for the Honour of the Grace of God in them, and for the Increase of their own future Weight of Glory. *Blessed is the Man that endures Temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the Crown of Life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him, Jam. i. 12. The Devil shall cast some of you into Prison, that you may be tried, and ye shall have Tribulation ten Days : be thou faithful unto Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life, Rev. ii. 10. Our light Afflictions which are but for a Moment, are working for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory, 2 Cor. iv. 17.*

However, upon the whole, this World, is a very troublesome and painful Place to the Children of God : They are subject here to many Weaknesses and Sins, Temptations and Follies ; they are in danger of new Defilements ; they go thro' many threatening Perils and many real Sorrows, which either are the Effects of the Displeasure of God, or, at least, carry an Appearance of divine Anger in them : But there is a time when these shall be finish'd, and Sorrow shall have its last Period : There is a time when these Calamities will be overpast, and shall return no more for ever.

Reflection. Why then, O my Soul, why shouldst thou be so fond of dwelling in this present World ? why shouldst thou be desirous of a long Continuance in it ? Hast thou never found Sorrows and Afflictions enough among the Scenes of Life, to make thee weary of them ? and when Sorrow and Sin have join'd together, have they not grievously imbitter'd this Life unto thee ? Wilt thou never be weaned from these sensible Scenes of Flesh and Blood ? Hast thou such a Love to the Darkneses, the Defilements, and the Uneasinesses which are found in such a Prison as this is as to make thee unwilling to depart when God shall call ? Hast thou dwelt so long in this Tabernacle of Clay, and doest thou not groan, being burden'd ? Hast thou no desire to a Release into that upper and better World, where Sorrows, Sins and Temptations have no Place, and where there shall never be the least Appearance or Suspicion of the Displeasure of thy God towards thee ?

Observ. II.

Observ. II. *The Grave is God's known Hiding-place for his People* : 'Tis his appointed Shelter and Retreat for his Favourites, when he finds them overpress'd either with present Dangers or Calamities, or when he foresees huge Calamities and Dangers, like Storms and Billows, ready to overtake them. *Isa. lvii. 1. The Righteous is taken away from the Evil to come.* God our heavenly Father beholds this Evil advancing forward thro' all the present Smiles of Nature, and all the peaceful Circumstances that surround us. He hides his Children in the Grave from a thousand Sins, and Sorrows, and Distresses of this Life, which they foresaw not : And even when they are actually beset behind and before, so that there seems to be no natural way for their Escape, God calls them aside into the Chambers of Death, in the same sort of Language as he uses in another Case, *Isa. xxvi. 20. Come my People, enter thou into thy Chambers, and shut thy Doors about thee, hide thyself as it were for a little Moment till the Indignation be overpass'd.*

And yet perhaps it is possible that this very Language of the Lord in *Isaiab* may refer to the Grave, as God's Hiding-place, for the Verse before promises a Resurrection. *Thy Dead Men shall live ; together with my dead Body shalt they arise : Awake and sing ye that dwell in the Dust, for thy Dew is as the Dew of Herbs, and the Earth shall cast out the Dead.* And if we may suppose this last Verse to have been transpos'd by any ancient Transcribers, so as to have follow'd originally Verse 20, or 21, 'tis very natural then to interpret the whole Paragraph concerning Death, as God's Hiding-place for his People, and their rising again thro' the Virtue of the Resurrection of *Christ* as their joyful Release.

Many a time God is pleased to shorten the Labours, and Travels, and Fatigues of good Men in this Wilderness, and he opens a Door of Rest to them where he pleases, and perhaps surprizes them into a State of Safety and Peace, *where the Weary are at rest, and the wicked cease from troubling ;* and holy *Job* seems to desire this Favour from his Maker here.

Sometimes indeed, in the History of this Book, he seems to break out into these Desires in too rude and angry a manner of Expression ; and in a Fit of criminal Impatience he murmurs against God for upholding him in the Land of the Living : But at other times, as in this Text, he represents his Desires with more Decency and Submission. Every
Desire

Desire to die is not to be construed sinful and criminal. Nature may ask of God a Relief from its Agonies and a Period to its Sorrows ; nor does Grace utterly forbid it, if there be also an humble Submission and Resignation to the Will of God, such as we find exemplify'd by our blessed Saviour, *Father, if it be thy Will, let this Cup pass from me ; yet not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

On this second *Observation* I desire to make these three *Reflections.*

Reflect. 1. Tho' a good Man knows that Death was originally appointed as a Curse for Sin, yet his Faith can trust God to turn that Curse into a Blessing : He can humbly ask his Maker to release him from the painful Bonds of Life, to hasten the slow Approaches of Death, and to hide him in the Grave from some overwhelming Sorrows. This is the Glory of God in his Covenant of Grace with the Children of Men, that he *turns Curses into Blessings*, Deut. xxiii. 5. And the Grave, which was design'd as a Prison for Sinners, is become a Place of Shelter to the Saints, where they are hidden and secured from rising Sorrows and Calamities. It is God's known Hiding-place for his own Children from the Envy and the Rage of Men, from all the known and unknown Agonies of Nature, the Diseases of the Flesh, and the Distresses of human Life, which perhaps might be overbearing and intolerable.

Why, O my fearful Soul, why shouldst thou be afraid of dying ? Why shouldst thou be frighted at the dark Shadows of the Grave, when thou art weary with the Toils and Crosses of the Day ? Hast thou not often desired the Shadow of the Evening, and longed for the Bed of natural Sleep, where thy Fatigues and thy Sorrows may be forgotten for a Season ? And is not the Grave itself a sweet Sleeping-place for the Saints, wherein they lie down and forget their Distresses, and feel none of the Miseries of human Life, and especially since it is soften'd and sanctify'd by the Son of God lying down there ? Why shouldst thou be afraid to lay thy Head in the Dust ? It is but entering into *God's Hiding-place*, into his Chambers of Rest and Repose : It is but committing thy Flesh, the meaner Part of thy Composition, to his Care in the dark for a short Season : He will hide thee there, and keep thee in Safety from the dreadful Trials which perhaps would overwhelm thy Spirit. Sometimes in the Course of his

his Providence he may find it necessary; that some spreading Calamity should overtake the Place where thou dwellest, or some distressing Stroke fall upon thy Family, or thy Friends, but he will hide thee under Ground before it comes, and thus disappoint all thy Fears, and lay every perplexing Thought into Rest and Silence.

Reflect. 2. Let it be ever remember'd, that the Grave is God's Hiding-place and not our own: We are to venture into it without Terror when he calls us; but he does not suffer us to break into it our own way without his Call. Death and Life are in the Hands of God, and he never gave the Keys of them to mortal Men to let themselves out of this World when they please, nor to enter into his Hiding-place without his leave.

Bear up then, O my Soul, under all the Sorrows and Trials of this present State till God himself shall say, *It is finish'd*: till our blessed *Jesus*, who has the Keys put into his Hands, shall open the Door of Death, and give thee an Entrance into that dark and peaceful Retreat. 'Tis a safe and silent Refuge from the Bustle and the Noise, the Labours and the Troubles of Life; but he that forces it open with his own Hands, how will he dare to appear before God in the World of Spirits? What will he answer, when with a dreadful Frown the great God shall demand of him, *Friend, how camest thou in hither?* Who sent for thee, or gave thee leave to come? Such a Wretch must venture upon so rash an Action at the Peril of the Wrath of God, and his own eternal Destruction.

Our blessed *Jesus*, who has all the vast Scheme of divine Counsels before his Eyes, by having the Books of his Father's Decrees put into his Hands, he knows how long it is proper for thee, O Christian, to fight and labour, to wrestle and strive with Sins, Temptations and Difficulties in the present Life. He knows best in what Moment to put a Period to them, and to pronounce thee Conqueror. Fly not from the Field of Battle for want of holy Fortitude, tho' thy Enemies and thy Dangers be never so many, nor dare to dismiss thyself from thy appointed Post, till the Lord of Life pronounce the Word of thy Dismission.

Sometimes I have been ready to say within myself, *Why is my Life prolonged in Sorrow? Why are my Days lengthen'd out to see further Wretchedness?* Methinks the Grave should

should be ready for me, and the House appointed for all the Living. What can I do further for God or for Man here on Earth, since my Nature pines away with painful Sickness, my Nerves are unstrung, my Spirits dissipated, and my best Powers of acting are infeebled and almost lost? Peace, peace, O thou complaining Spirit; Dost thou know the Counsels of the Almighty, and the secret Designs of thy God and thy Saviour? He has many deep and unknown Purposes in continuing his Children amidst heavy Sorrows, which they can never penetrate or learn in this World. Silence and Submission becomes thee at all times. *Father, not my Will but thy Will be done.*

And let it be hinted to thee, O my Soul, that 'tis much more honourable to be weary of this Life, because of the Sins and Temptations of it, than because of the Toils and Sorrows that attend it. If we must *groan in this Tabernacle being burden'd*, let the Snares, and the Dangers, and the Defilements of it be the chief Springs of thy Groaning and the warmest Motives to request a Release. God loves to see his People more afraid of Sin than of Sorrow. If thy Corruptions are so strong, and the Temptations of Life so unhappily surround thee, that thou art daily crying out, *Who shall deliver thee from the Body of Sin and Death*, then thou mayst more honourably send up a Wish to Heaven, *O that I had the Wings of a Dove, that I might fly away and be at rest! O that God wouldst hide me in the Grave from my prevailing Iniquities, and from the ruffling and disquieting Influence of my own Follies and my daily Temptations!* But never be thou quite weary of doing or suffering the Will of thy heavenly Father, tho' he should continue thee in this mortal Life a Length of Years beyond thy Desires, and should withhold thee from his secret Place of Retreat and Rest.

A constant and joyful Readiness at the Call of God to depart hence, with a chearful Patience to continue here during his Pleasure, is the most perfect and blessed Temper that a Christian can arrive at: It gives God the highest Glory, and keeps the Soul in the sweetest Peace.

Reflect. 3. This one Thought, that the *Grave is God's Hiding-place*, should compose our Spirits to Silence, and abate our Mourning for the loss of Friends, who have given sufficient Evidence that they are the Children of God. Their heavenly Father has seized them from the midst of their Trials,

Trials, Dangers and Difficulties, and given them a secure Refuge in his own appointed Place of Rest and Safety. *Jesus* has open'd the Door of the Grave with his golden Key, and hath let them into a Chamber of Repose : He has concealed them in a silent Retreat, where Temptation and Sin cannot reach them, and where Anguish and Misery can never come.

When I have lost therefore a dear and delightful Relative or Friend, or perhaps many of them in a short Season are called successively down to the Dust, let me say thus within myself, "It is their God and my God has done it: He
 " saw what new Temptations were ready to surround them
 " in the Circumstances of Life wherein they stood : He
 " beheld the Trials and Difficulties that were ready to en-
 " compass them on all sides, and his Love made a way for
 " their Escape : He open'd the dark Retreat of Death,
 " and hid them there from a thousand Perils which might
 " have plunged them into Guilt and Defilement : He be-
 " held this as the proper Season to give them a Release
 " from a World of Labour and Toil, Vanity and Vexation,
 " Sin and Sorrow : They are *taken away from the evil to*
 " *come*, and I will learn to complain no more. The bless-
 " ed *Jesus*, to whom they had devoted themselves, well
 " knew what Allurements of Gaiety and Joy might have
 " been too prevalent over them, and he gave them a
 " kind Escape lest their Souls should suffer any real Detri-
 " ment, lest their strict Profession of Piety should be soiled
 " or dishonour'd : He knew how much *they were able to*
 " *bear*, and he would lay upon them no further Burden : He
 " saw rising Difficulties approaching, and new Perils com-
 " ing upon them beyond their Strength, and he fulfills his
 " own Promises, and glorifies his own Faithfulness, by open-
 " ing the Door of his well-known Hiding-place, and giv-
 " ing them a safe Refuge there. He keeps them there
 " in secret from the Corruptions of a publick Life, and
 " the multiply'd Dangers of a degenerate Age, which
 " might have divided their Hearts from God and Things
 " heavenly : And perhaps he guards them also in that dark
 " Retreat from some long and languishing Sickness, some
 " unknown Distress, some overbearing Flood of Misery,
 " which was like to come upon them had they continued
 " longer on the Stage of Life.

" Let

“ Let this silence thy murmuring Thoughts, O my Soul ;
 “ let this dry up thy Tears which are ready to overflow on
 “ such an Occasion. Dare not pronounce it a Stroke of An-
 “ ger from the Hand of God, who divided them from the
 “ tempting or the distressing Scenes of this World, and kindly
 “ removed them out of the Way of Danger. This was the
 “ wisest Method of his Love to guard them from many a
 “ Folly and many a Sorrow, which he foresaw just at the
 “ Door.”

Will the wounded and complaining Heart go on to groan
 and murmur still, “ But my Son was carried off in the Prime
 “ of Life, or my Daughter in her blooming Years ; they
 “ stood flourishing in the Vigour of their Nature, and ’twas
 “ my Delight to behold their growing Appearances of Vir-
 “ tue and Goodness, and that in the midst of Ease, and Plenty,
 “ and Prospects of Happiness, so far as this World can af-
 “ ford it ?”

But could you look through the next Year to the End of it ?
 Could you penetrate into future Events, and survey the Scenes
 of seven Years to come ? Could your Heart assure itself of the
 real Possession of this imaginary View of Happiness and Peace ?
 Perhaps the blessed God saw the Clouds gathering afar off,
 and at a great Distance of Time, and in much Kindness he
 housed your Favourite from unknown Trials, Dangers and Sor-
 rows. So a prudent Gardener, who is acquainted with the
 Sky, and skilful in the Signs of the Seasons, even in the Month
 of *May*, foresees a heavy Tempest rising in the Edge of the
 Horizon, while a vulgar Eye observes nothing but Sunshine ;
 and he who knows the Worth and the Tenderness of some
 special Plants in his Garden, houses them in haste, lest they
 be exposed and demolished by the sweeping Rain or Hail.

You say, *These Children were in the Bloom of Life, and in
 the most desirable Appearance of Joy and Satisfaction* : but is not
 that also usually the most dangerous Season of Life, and the
 Hour of most powerful Temptation ? Was not that the time
 when their Passions might have been too hard for them, and
 the deluding Pleasures of Life stood round them with a most
 perilous Assault ? And what if God, out of pure Compassion,
 saw it necessary to hide them from an Army of Perils at once,
 and to carry them off the Stage of Life with more Purity and
 Honour ? Surely when the great God has appointed it, when

the blessed *Jesus* has done it, we would not rise up in Opposition and say, “ But I would have had them live longer here “ at all Adventures : I wish they were alive again, let the “ Consequence be what it will.” This is not the Voice of Faith or Patience ; this is not the Language of holy Submission and Love to God, nor can our Souls approve of such irregular Storms of ungoverned Affection, which oppose themselves to the divine Will; and ruffle the Soul with criminal Disquietude.

There are many, even of the Children of God, who had left a more unblemished and a more honourable Character behind them, if they had died much sooner. The latter End of Life hath sometimes sullied their Brightness, and tarnished the Glory they had acquired in a hopeful Youth : Their growing Years have fallen under such Temptations, and been defiled and disgraced by such Failings, as would have been intirely prevented had they been summon’d away into God’s Hiding-place some Years before. Our blessed *Jesus* walks among the Roses and Lillies in the Garden of his Church, and when he sees a wintry Storm coming upon some tender Plants of Righteousness, he hides them in the Earth to preserve Life in them, that they may bloom with new Glories when they shall be raised from that Bed. The blessed God acts like a tender Father, and consults the Safety and the Honour of his Children, when the Hand of his Mercy snatches them away before that powerful Temptation comes, which he foresees would have defiled and distress’d, and almost destroy’d them. They are not lost, but they are gone to Rest a little sooner than we are. Peace be to that Bed of Dust where they are hidden, by the Hand of their God, from unknown Dangers! Blessed be our Lord *Jesus*, who has the Keys of the Grave, and never opens it for his Favourites but in the wisest Season!

Observ. III. *God has appointed a set Time in his own Counsels for all his Children to continue in Death* : Those whom he has hidden in the Grave he remembers they lie there, and he will not suffer them to abide in the Dust for ever. When *Job* intreats of God that he may be hidden from his Sorrows in the Dust of Death, he requests also that *God would appoint a set Time for his Release, and remember him*. His Faith seems to have had a Glimpse of the blessed Resurrection. Our Senses and our carnal Passions would cry out, where is *Abraham*, and *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and the rest of the ancient Worthies, who have been

been long Sleepers in their Beds of Repose for many Thousand Years? But Faith assures us, that God numbers the Days and the Months of their Concealment under Ground, he knows where their Dust lies, and where to find every scatter'd Atom against the great restoring Day. They are unseen indeed and forgotten of Men, but they are under the Eye and the Keeping of the blessed God: He watches over their sleeping Dust, and while the World has forgotten and lost even their Names, they are every Moment under the Eye of God, for they stand written in his Book of Life, with the Name of the Lamb at the Head of them.

Jesus, his Son, had but three Days appointed him to dwell in this Hiding-place, and he rose again at the appointed Hour. Other good Men, who were gone to their Grave not long before him, arose again at the Resurrection of Christ, and made a Visit to many in *Jerusalem*: Their appointed Hiding-place was but for a short Season; and all the Children of God shall be remember'd in their proper Seasons in Faithfulness to his Son to whom he has given them: The *Head* is raised to the Mansions of Glory, and the *Members* must not for ever lie in Dust.

Reflection. Then let all the Saints of God wait with Patience for the appointed Time when he will call them down to Death, and let them lie down in their secret Beds of Repose, and in a waiting Frame commit their Dust to his Care till the Resurrection. *All the Days of my appointed Time* (says *Job*) *I will wait till my Change come.* The Word *Appointed Time* is supposed to signify *Warfare* in the *Hebrew*: As a Centinel, when he is fixed to his Post by his General, he waits there till he has Orders for a Release. And this Clause of the Verse may refer either to *dying* or *rising again*, for either of them is a very great and important *Change*, passing upon human Nature, whether from Life to Death, or from Death to Life.

It is said by the Prophet *Isaiab*, ch. xxviii. 16. *He that believeth shall not make haste*, i. e. he that trusts in the Wisdom and the promised Mercy of God will not be too urgent or importunate in any of his Desires: 'Tis for Want of Faith that Nature sometimes is in too much haste to die, as *Job* in some of his Expressions appears to have been, or as *Elijah* perhaps discover'd himself when he was wandering in the Wilderness disconsolate and almost despairing, or as the Prophet *Jeremiab*

sufficiently manifested, when he cursed the Day of his Birth, or as *Jonah* was, that peevish Prophet, when he was angry with God for not taking away his Life ; but the ground of it was, he was vexed because God did not destroy *Nineveh* according to his Prophecy : These are certain Blemishes of the Children of God left upon Record in his Word, to give us Warning of our Danger of Impatience, and to guard us against their Sins and Follies. And since we know that God has appointed the Seasons of our Entrance into Death, and into the State of the Resurrection, we should humbly commit the Disposal of ourselves to the Hand of our God, who will bestow upon us the most needful Blessings in the most proper Season.

Do not the *Spirits of the Just made perfect* wait in Patience for the great and blessed rising Day which God has appointed, and for the illustrious Change of their Bodies from Corruption and Darkness to Light, and Life, and Glory ? God has promised it, and that suffices, and supports their waiting Spirits, tho' they know not the Hour. The *Father keeps that in his own Hand*, and perhaps reveals it to none but his Son *Jesus*, who is exalted to be the Governor and Judge of the World. There are Millions of Souls waiting in that separate State for the Accomplishment of these last and best Promises, ready to shout and rejoice when they shall see and feel that bright Morning dawning upon them.

Wait therefore, O my Soul, as becomes a Child of God in the Wilderness among many Trials, Darknессes and Distresses. He has stripped thee perhaps of one Comfort after another, and thy Friends and dear Relatives in Succession are called down to the Dust ; they are released from their Conflicts, and are placed far out of the reach of every Temptation ; and it is not thy Business to prescribe to God at what Hour he shall release thee also. Whensoever he is pleased to call thee to lay down thy Flesh in the Dust, and to enter into God's Hiding-place, meet thou the Summons with holy Courage, Satisfaction and Joy, enter into the Chamber of Rest till all the Days of Sin, Sorrow and Wretchedness are overpast : Lie down there in a waiting Frame, and commit thy Flesh to his Care and Keeping till the Hour in which he has appointed thy glorious Change.

Observ. IV. *The lively View of a happy Resurrection, and a well grounded Hope of this blessed Change, is a solid and divine Comfort*

Comfort to the Saints of God, under all Trials of every kind both in Life and Death. The Faith and Hope of a joyful Rising-day has supported the Children of God under long Distresses and huge Agonies of Sorrow which they sustain here. It is the Expectation of this desirable Day that animates the Soul with Vigour and Life to fulfil every painful and dangerous Duty. 'Tis for this we expose ourselves to the bitter Reproaches and Persecutions of the wicked World; 'tis for this that we conflict with all our Adversaries on Earth, and all the Powers of Darkness that are sent from Hell to annoy us; 'tis this joyful Expectation that bears up our Spirits under every present Burden and Calamity of Life.

What could we do in such a painful and dying World, or how could we bear with Patience the long Fatigues of such a wretched Life if we had no hope of rising again from the Dead? Surely *we are the most miserable of all Men* in Days of publick Persecution, *if we had hope only in this Life*, 1 Cor. xv. 19. 'Tis for this that we labour and suffer, and endure whatsoever our heavenly Father is pleased to lay upon us. 'Tis this confirms our Fortitude, and makes *us stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, for as much as we know that our Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*, 1 Cor. xv. 58. 'Tis this that enables us to bear the Loss of our dearest Friends with Patience and Hope, and assuages the Smart of our sharpest Sorrows: For since we believe that *Jesus died and rose again*, so we rejoice in hope that *they which sleep in Jesus shall be bro't with him* at his Return, and shall appear in brighter and more glorious Circumstances than ever our Eyes were blessed with here on Earth, 1 Thes. iv. 13. This teaches us to triumph over Death and the Grave in divine Language, *O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is thy Victory?*

Reflection. What are thy chief Burdens, O my Soul? Whence are all thy Sighs and thy daily Groanings? What are thy Distresses of Flesh or Spirit? Summon them all in one View, and see whether there be not Power and Glory enough in a Resurrection to conquer and silence them all, and to put thy present Sorrows to flight?

Dost thou dwell in a *vexing and persecuting World*, amongst Oppressions and Reproaches? But those who reproach and oppress are but mortal Creatures, who shall shortly go down to the Dust, and then they shall tyrannize and afflict thee no more:

The great Rising-day shall change the Scene from Oppression and Reproach to Dominion and Glory. When *they lie down in the Grave like Beasts of Slaughter, Death shall feed on them, and the Upright shall have Dominion over them in the Morning, when God shall redeem thy Soul from the Power of the Grave.* Thy God shall hide thy Body from their Rage in his own appointed Resting-place, and he shall receive thy Soul, and keep it secure in his own Presence, till that blessed Morning break upon this lower Creation; then shalt thou *arise, and shine, for the Glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.*

Do the *Calamities which thou sufferest proceed from the Hand of God?* Art thou disquieted with daily Pain, with Sicknesses and Anguish in thy Flesh? Or art thou surrounded with Crosses and Disappointments in thy outward Circumstances? Are thy Spirits sunk with many Loads of Care and pressing Perplexities? Canst thou not forget them all in the Vision that Faith can give thee of the great Rising-day? Canst thou not say in the Language of Faith, *The Sufferings of this present Time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed in us?* Then the Head and the Heart shall ake no more, and every Circumstance around thee shall be pleasing and joyful for ever.

Or art thou tenderly affected with the *Loss of pious Friends*, who have been very dear and desirable? Perhaps thy Sensibilities here are too great and painful: They are such indeed as Nature is ready to indulge, but are they not more than God requires, or the Gospel allows? Do not thy Thoughts dwell too much on the Gloom and Darkness of the Grave? O think of that bright Hour when every Saint shall rise from the dark Retreats of Death with more complete Characters of Beauty, Holiness and Pleasure than ever this World could shew them in! They are not perish'd, but sent a little before us into *God's Hiding place*, where tho' they lie in Dust and Darkness, yet they are safe from the Dangers and Vexations of Life; but they shall spring up in the happy Moment into Immortality, and shall join with thee in a mutual Surprize at each other's divine Change.

Or dost thou feel the *Corruptions of thy Heart* working within thee, and the Sins of thy Nature restless in their Endeavours to bring Defilement upon thy Soul, and Guilt upon thy Conscience: Go on and maintain the holy Warfare against all these
rising

rising Iniquities ? This thy Warfare shall not continue long : Thou shalt find every one of these Sins buried with thee in the Grave, but they shall arise to assault thee no more. The Saint shall leave every Sin behind him when he breaks out of the Dust at the Summons of *Christ*, and thou shalt find no Seeds of Iniquity in thy Body when it is raised from the Grave. *Holiness to the Lord* shall be inscribed upon all thy Powers for ever.

Or art thou perplex'd, O my Soul, at the near Prospect of Death and all the Terrors and dismal Appearances that surround it ? Art thou afraid to lie down in the cold and noisome Grave ? Does thy Nature shudder at it as a gloomy Place of Horror ? These indeed are the Prejudices of Sense ; but the Language of Faith will tell thee, 'tis only *God's Hiding place* where he secures his Saints till all the Ages of Sin and Sorrow are overpast. Look forward to the glorious Morning when thou shalt rise from the Dust among ten thousand of thy Fellows, every one in the Image of the Son of God, with their *Bodies formed after the Likeness of his glorious Body*, and rejoicing together with divine Satisfaction in the Pleasure of this heavenly Change. Try whether the Meditation of these Glories, and the distant Prospect of this illustrious Day, will not scatter all the Gloom that hovers round the Grave, and vanquish the fiercest Appearances of the King of Terrors.

What is there, O my Soul, among all the Miseries thou hast felt, or all that thou fearest, that can sink thy Courage, if the Faith of a Resurrection be but alive and wakeful ? But this leads me to the

Observ. V. *The Saints of God, who are resting in their Beds of Dust, will arise joyfully at the Call of their heavenly Father. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee*, said holy Job. The Command of God creates Life, and gives Power to the Dead to arise and speak. *I come, O Lord, I come.* When Jesus, the Son of God, as with the Trumpet of an Archangel, shall pronounce the Word which he spake to *Lazarus, Arise and come forth*, Dust and Rottenness shall hear the Call from Heaven, and the Clods of Corruption all round the Earth shall arise into the Form of Man : The Saints shall appear at once and answer to that divine Call, array'd in a Glory like that of Angels ; an illustrious Host of Martyrs and Confessors for the Truth ; an Army of Heroes and valiant Sufferers for the

Name and Cause of God and his Son ; an innumerable Multitude of faithful Servants who have finish'd their Work, and lay down at Rest.

How shall *Adam*, the Father of our Race, together with the holy Men of his Day, be surprized, when they shall awake out of their long Sleep of five thousand Years ? How shall all the Saints of the intermediate Ages break from their Beds of Darkness with intense Delight ? And those who lay down but Yesterday in the Dust shall start up at once with their early Ancestors, and answer to the Call of Jesus from one End of Time to the other, and from all the Ends of the Earth. They shall arise together to *meet the Lord in the Air, that they may be for ever with the Lord.*

Never was any Voice obey'd with more Readiness and Joy than the Voice or Trumpet of the great Archangel, summoning all the Children of God to awake from their long Slumbers, and to leave their dusty Beds behind them, with all the Seeds of Sin and Sorrow, which are buried and lost there for ever. Never did any Army on Earth march with more Speed and Pleasure at the Sound of the Trumpet, to attend their General to a new Triumph, than this Glorious Assembly shall arise to meet their returning Lord, when this last Trumpet sounds, and when he shall come the second Time in the full Glories of his Person and his Offices as Lord and Judge of the World, to bring his faithful Followers into complete Salvation.

Reflection. Whensoever, O my Soul, thou feelest any Reluctance to obey the Summons of Death, encourage thy Faith, and scatter thy Fears, by waiting for the Call of God to a blessed Resurrection. *Jesus* himself lay down in the Grave at his Father's Command, and he arose with Joy at the appointed Hour as the Head of the new Creation, as the First-born from the Dead ; and he has Orders given him by the Father to summon every Saint from their Graves at the long appointed Hour. Because *Jesus* arose and lives, they shall arise and live also. O may my Flesh lie down in the Dust with all Courage and Composure, and rejoice to escape into a Place of Rest and Silence, far away from the Noise and Tumult, the Hurry and Bustle of this present Life ; being well assured that the next Sound which shall be heard is the Voice of the Son of God, *Arise ye Dead!* Make haste then, O blessed *Jesus*, and
finish

finish thy divine Work here on Earth : I lay down my Head to sleep in the Dust, waiting for thy Call to awake in the Morning.

Observ. VI. *God takes delight in his Works of Nature, but much more when they are dignify'd and adorned by the Operations of divine Grace. Thou wilt have a desire, saith the good Man in my Text, to the Work of thy own Hands.* Thou hast moulded me and fashion'd me at first by thy Power, thou hast new created me by thy Spirit, and tho' thou hidest me for a Season in one of thy secret Chambers of Death, thou wilt raise me again to Light and Life, *and in my Flesh shall I see God.*

When the Almighty had created this visible World, he survey'd his Works on the seventh Day, and pronounced them all *Good*, and he took delight in them all before Sin enter'd and defiled them : And when he has deliver'd the Creatures of his Power from the Bondage of Corruption, and has purged our Souls and our Bodies from Sin and from every evil Principle, he will again delight in the Sons and Daughters of *Adam* whom he has thus cleansed and refined by his sovereign Grace, and has qualify'd and adorned them for his own Presence : *He will sing and rejoice over them, and rest in his Love,* Zeph. iii. 17.

He will love to see them with his Son *Jesus* at their Head, diffusing Holiness and Glory thro' all his Members. *Jesus* the Redeemer will love to see them round him, for he has bought them with his Blood, and they are a Treasure too precious to be for ever lost. He will rejoice to behold them rising at his Call into a Splendor like his own, and they *shall be satisfy'd when they awake from Death into his Likeness*, and appear in the Image of his own glorious Body, fit Heirs for the Inheritance of Heaven, fit Companions for the blessed Angels of Light, and prepar'd to dwell for ever with himself.

Reflection. And shall not we who are the Work of his Hands have a Desire to him that made us ? to him that redeemed us ? to him that has new created and moulded us into his own Likeness ? Do we not long to see him ? Have we no Desire to be with him, even tho' we should be *absent from the Body* for a Season ? But much more should we delight to think of being *present with the Lord*, when our whole Natures, Body and Soul, shall appear as the new Workmanship of almighty Power ; our Souls new created in the Image of God, and our Bodies new born from the Dead, into a Life of Immortality.

VII. The

VII. The last *Observation* is of a very general Nature, and spreads itself thro' all my Text, and that is, *How much are we indebted to God for the Revelation of the New Testament, which teaches us to find out the Blessings which are contain'd in the Old, and to fetch out the Glories and Treasures which are concealed there?* The Writers of the Gospel have not only pointed us to the rich Mines where these Treasures lie, but have brought forth many of the Jewels and set them before us. 'Tis this Gospel that *brings Life and Immortality to Light by Jesus Christ*, 2 Tim. i. 10. 'Tis this Gospel that scatters the Gloom and Darkness which was spread over the Face of the Grave, and illuminates all the Chambers of Death. Who could have found out the Doctrine of the Resurrection contain'd in that Word of Grace given to *Abraham, I am thy God*, if *Jesus*, the great Prophet, had not taught us to explain it thus, Matth. xxii. 31? *God is not the God of the Dead, but of the Living.*

We who have the Happiness to live in the Days of the *Messiah*, know more than all the ancient Prophets were acquainted with, and understand the Word of their Prophecies better than they themselves; for *they searched what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify, when it testify'd before hand the Sufferings of Christ, and the Glory which should follow*, 1 Pet. i. 11. But we read all this fairly written in the Gospel. Do you think that good *David* could have explain'd some of his own *Psalms* into so divine a Sense, or *Isaiab* given such a bright Account of his own Words of *Prophecy*, as *St. Paul* has done in several Places of the New Testament, where he cites and unfolds them? Could those illustrious Ancients have given us such *abundant Consolation and Hope thro' the Scriptures*, which they themselves wrote *aforetime*, as this Apostle has done? Rom. xv. 4. Do you think *Job* could have read us such a Lecture on his own Expressions in this Text, or in that bright Prophecy in the ninth Chapter, as the very meanest among the Ministers of the Gospel can do by the Help of the New Testament? For in Point of clear Discoveries of divine Truths and Graces, *the least in the Kingdom of the Messiah is greater than John the Baptist and all the Prophets*, and our blessed *Jesus* has told us so, Matth. xi. 11, 13. And by the Aid and Influences of his Spirit we may be taught yet further to search into these hidden Mines of Grace, and bring forth new Treasures of Glory.

Reflection. Awake, O my Soul, and bless the Lord with all thy Powers, and give thanks with holy Joy for the Gospel of his Son *Jesus*. 'Tis *Jesus* by his rising from the Dead has left a divine Light upon the Gates of the Grave, and scatter'd much of the Darkness that surrounded it. 'Tis the Gospel of *Christ*, which casts a Glory even upon the Bed of Death, and spreads a Brightness upon the Graves of the Saints in the lively Views of a great Rising-day. O blessed and surprizing Prospect of Faith! O illustrious Scenes of future Vision and Transport! when the Son of God shall bring forth to publick View all his redeemed ones, who had been long hidden in Night and Dust, and shall present them all to God the Father in his own Image, bright, and holy, and unblemished, in the midst of all the Splendors of the Resurrection! O blessed and joyful Voice, when he shall say with divine Pleasure, "*Here am I, and the Children which thou hast given me* : We have both passed thro' the Grave, and I have made them all Conquerors of Death, and vested them with Immortality according to thy divine Commission! *Thine they were, O Father, and thou hast given them into my Hands, and behold I have brought them all safe to thy appointed Mansions, and I present them before thee without Spot or Blemish.*"

And many a Parent of a pious Household in that Day, when they shall see their Sons and their Daughters around them, all array'd with the Beams of the Son of Righteousness, shall eccho with holy Joy to the Voice of the blessed *Jesus*, "*Lord here am I and the Children which thou hast given me.* I was afraid, as *Job* once might be when his Friends suggested this Fear; I was afraid that *my Children had sinned against God, and he had cast them away for their Transgression* : But I am now convinced, when he seized them from my Sight he only took them out of the way of Temptation and Danger, and concealed them for a Season in his safe Hiding-place : I mourned in the Day-time for a lost Son or a lost Daughter, and in the Night my Couch was bedewed with my Tears : I was scared with midnight Dreams on their account, and the Visions of the Grave terrify'd me because my Children were there : I gave up myself to Sorrow for Fear of the Displeasure of my God both against them and against me : But how unreasonable were these Sorrows? How groundless were my Fears? How gloriously am I disappointed
this

“ this blessed Morning ? I see my dear Offspring called out
 “ of that long Retreat where God had concealed them, and
 “ they arise to meet the divine Call. I hear them answering
 “ with Joy to the happy Summons. My Eyes behold them
 “ risen in the Image of my God and their God ; they are
 “ near me, they stand with me at the right Hand of the Judge ;
 “ now shall we rejoice together in the Sentence of eternal Blef-
 “ sedness from the Lips of my Lord and their Lord, my Re-
 “ deemer and their Redeemer.” Amen.

Among my Papers I have found a Speech spoken at a Grave, which I transcribed almost fifty Years ago, and which deserves to be saved from perishing. It was pronounced many Years before at the Funeral of a pious Person, by a Minister there present, supposed to be the Rev. Mr. Peter Sterry ; and the Subject of it being suited to this Discourse, I thought it not improper to preserve it here.

CHRISTIAN Friends, though Sin be enter'd into the World, and by Sin Death, and so Death pass'd upon all Men, for that all have sinned ; yet it seems not wholly suitable to our Christian Hope, to stand by and see the Grave with open Mouth take in, and swallow down any Part of a precious Saint, and not bring some Testimony against the Devourer. And yet that our Witnesses may be in Righteousness, we must first own, acknowledge, and accept of that Good and Serviceableness that is in it.

For thro' the Death and Resurrection of our dear Redeemer, Death and the Grave are become sweeten'd to us, and sanctify'd for us : So that as Death is but a Sleep, the Grave thro' his lying down in it and rising again, is become as a Bed of Repose to them that are in him, and a safe and a quiet Hiding-place for his Saints till the Resurrection.

And in this respect we do for ourselves, and for this our dearly Beloved in the Lord, accept of thee, O Grave, and readily deliver up her Body to thee ; it is a Body that hath been weaken'd and weary'd with long Affliction and Anguish, we freely give it into thee ; receive it, and let it have in thee a
 quiet

quiet Rest from all its Labours ; for thus we read it written of thee, *There the Wicked cease from troubling, and there the Weary be at Rest.*

Besides, it is, O Grave, a Body that hath been sweetly embalmed, by a virtuous, pious, peaceable Conversation, by several inward Openings and Out-pourings of the Spirit of Life, by much Patience and Meekness in strong Trials and Afflictions : Receive it, and let it enjoy in thee, what was once deeply impress'd on her own Heart, and in a due Season written out with her own Hand, *a Sabbath in the Grave* : For thus also we find it recorded of our Lord and her Lord, that he enjoy'd the Rest of his last Sabbath in the Grave.

But we know thee, O Grave, to be also a Devourer, and yet we can freely deliver up the Body into thee. There was in it a contracted Corruptibility, Dishonour and Weakness ; take them as thy proper Prey, they belong to thee, and we would not withhold them from thee : Freely swallow them up for ever, that they may appear no more.

Yet know, O Grave, there is in the Body, consider'd as once united to such a Soul, a divine Relation to the Lord of Life ; and this thou must not, thou canst not dissolve or destroy. But know, and even before thee, and over thee be it spoken, that there is a Season hastening wherein we shall expect it again from thee in Incorruption, Honour and Power.

We now sow it into thee in *Dishonour*, but expect it again returned from thee in *Glory* ; we now sow it into thee, in *Weakness*, we expect it again in *Power* ; we now sow it into thee a *natural Body*, we look for it again from thee a *spiritual Body*.

And when thou hast fulfilled that End for which the Prince of Life, who took thee Captive, made thee to serve, then shalt thou who hast devour'd, be thyself also swallow'd up ; for thus it is written of thee, *O Death, I will be thy Plague, O Grave, I will be thy Destruction.* And then shall we sing over thee what also is written of thee, *O Death, where is now thy Sting ? O Grave, where is now thy Victory ?* Amen.

Note, A Line or two is alter'd in this Speech, to suit it more to the Understanding and the Sense of the present Age.

DISCOURSE XII.

The Nature of the Punishments in Hell.

Mark. ix. 46.

Where their Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched.

INTRODUCTION.

THESE Words are a short Description of *Hell*, by the Lips of the Son of God, who came down from Heaven : And he who lay in the Bosom of his Father, and was intimate in all the Counsels of his Mercy and Justice, must be supposed to know what the Terrors and the Wrath of God are, as well as his Compassion and his Goodness.

'Tis confess'd, that a Discourse on this dreadful Subject is not a direct Ministration of Grace and the glad Tidings of Salvation, yet it has a great and happy Tendency to the same End, even the Salvation of sinful Men ; for it awakens them to a more piercing Sight, and to a more keen Sensation of their own Guilt and Danger ; it possesses their Spirits with a more lively Sense of their Misery, it fills them with a holy Dread of divine Punishment, and excites the powerful Passion of Fear to make them fly from the Wrath to come, and betake themselves to the Grace of God revealed in the Gospel.

The blessed Saviour himself, who was the most perfect Image of his Father's Love, and the prime Minister of his Grace, publishes more of these Terrors to the World, and preaches Hell and Damnation to Sinners more than all the Prophets or Teachers that ever went before him ; and several of the Apostles imitate their Lord in this practice : They kindle the Flames of Hell in their Epistles, they thunder thro' the very Hearts and Consciences of Men with the Voice of Damnation and eternal Misery, to make stupid Sinners feel as much of these Terrors in the present Prospect as is possible, in order to escape the actual Sensation of them in time to come.

Such

Such awful Discourses are many times also of excellent use to keep the Children of God, and the Disciples of *Jesus*, in a holy and watchful Frame, and to affright them from returning to Sin and Folly, and from the Indulgence of any Temptation, by setting these Terrors of the Lord before their Eyes. O may these Words of his Terror, from the Lips of one of the meanest of his Ministers, be attended with divine Power from the convincing and sanctifying Spirit, that they may answer these happy Ends and Purposes, that they may excite a solemn Reverence of the dreadful Majesty of God in all our Souls, and awaken us to Repentance for every Sin, and a more watchful Course of Holiness !

Let us then consider the Expression in my Text : When our Saviour mentions the Word *Hell*, he adds, *where their Worms dieb not, and the Fire is not quenched* ; in which Description we may read the *Nature* of this Punishment, and the *Perpetuity* of it.

First, We shall consider the *Nature of this Punishment*, as it is represented by the Metaphors which our Saviour uses ; and if I were to give the most natural and proper Sense of this Representation, I would say that our Saviour might borrow this Figure of Speech from these three Considerations.

1. *Worms and Fire* are the two most general ways whereby the Bodies of the Dead are destroy'd ; for whether they are buried or not buried, *Worms* devour those who by the Custom of their Country are not burnt *with Fire* : And perhaps he might refer to the Words of *Isai.* lxvi. 24. where the Prophet seems to foretel the Punishment of those who will not receive the Gospel, when it shall be preached to all Nations : *They*, says he, (that is the true *Israel*, the Saints of God, or *Christians*) *they shall go forth and look upon the Carcasses of the Men who have transgressed against me, for their Worm shall not die, neither shall their Fire be quenched, and they shall be an Abhorrence to all Flesh.* 'Tis highly probable that this is only a Metaphor referring to the Punishment of the Souls of obstinate Unbelievers in Hell, for it would be but a very small Punishment indeed, if only their dead Bodies were devour'd by Worms or Fire, or rather no Punishment at all besides a Memorial of their Sin.

2. Consider, the *Gnawing of Worms* and the *Burning of Fire* are some of the most smart and severe Torments that a living

living Man can feel in the Flesh ; therefore the Vengeance of God, upon the Souls of obstinate Sinners, is set forth by it in our Saviour's Discourse ; and 'twas probably well known amongst the Jews, as appears by some of the *apocryphal* Writings, Judith xvi. 17. *Woe to the Nation that rises up against my Kindred ; the Lord Almighty will take Vengeance of them in the Day of Judgment, putting Fire and Worms in their Flesh, and they shall feel them and weep for ever.* And Ecclus. vii. 16, 17. *Number not thyself among the Multitude of Sinners, but remember the Wrath will not tarry long. Humble thy Soul greatly, for the Vengeance of the Ungodly is Fire and Worms.*

3. Consider, whether *Worms* feed upon a living Man or devour his dead Body, still *they are such as are bred in his own Flesh ; but Fire is brought by other Hands*, and applied to the Flesh : Even so this Metaphor of a *Worm* happily represents the *inward Torments*, and the *teazing and vexing Passions* which shall arise in the Souls of those unhappy Creatures, who are the just Objects of this Punishment ; and it is called *their Worm*, that Worm that belongs to them, and is bred within them by the foul Vices and Diseases of their Souls : But the *Fire which shall never be quenched* refers rather to the Pains and Anguish which come from *without*, and that chiefly from the Hand of God, the righteous Avenger of Sin, and from his Indignation, which is compared to Fire.

SECTION I.

The Worm that dieth not.

Let us begin with the first of these, viz. the *Torments which are derived from the gnawing Worm, those Agonies and uneasy Passions which will arise and work in the Souls of these wretched Creatures*, so far as we can collect them from the Word of God, from the Reason of Things, and the working Powers of human Nature.

When an Impenitent Sinner is cast into Hell, we have abundant Reason to suppose, that the evil Temper of his Soul, and the vicious Principles within him, are not abated, but his natural Powers, and the Vices which have tainted them and mingle with them, are awaken'd and enraged into intense Activity and Exercise, under the first Sensations of his dreadful Punishment. Let us endeavour to conceive then what would be the Ferments, the raging Passions, and the vexing inward Torments of a wicked Man, seiz'd by the Officers of an Almighty Judge,

Judge borne away by the Executioners of Vengeance, and plunged into a Pit of Torture and smarting Misery, while at the same time he had a most fresh and piercing Conviction ever present, that he had brought all this Mischief upon himself by his own Guilt and Folly.

I. The first Particular Piece of Wretchedness therefore, contain'd in this Metaphor, is the *Remorse and terrible Anguish of Conscience which shall never be relieved*. How terrible are the Racks of a guilty Conscience here on Earth, which arise from a Sense of past Sins? How does *David* cry out and roar under the Disquietude of his Spirit? Psal. xxxii. 3. *While I kept silence and confess'd not mine Iniquity, my Bones waxed old through my roaring all the Day long, Day and Night thy Hand was heavy upon me, and my Moisture is turned into the Drought of Summer*: And again, Psal. xxxviii. 4. *Mine Iniquities are gone over mine Head, as an heavy Burden, they are too heavy for me*. God has wisely so framed the Nature and Spirit of Man, that a Reflection on his past Misbehaviour should raise such keen Anguish at his Heart; and thousands have felt it in a dreadful Degree, even while they have continued in this World, in the Land of Life and Hope.

But when Death has divided the Soul from this Body, and from all the Means of Grace, and cut off all the Hopes of pardoning Mercy for ever, what Smart beyond all our Thoughts and Expressions must the Sinner feel from such inward Wounds of Conscience? And it gives a twinging Accent to every Sorrow when the Sinner is constrain'd to cry out, "*It is I, it is I who have brought all this upon myself*. Life and Death were set before me in the World where once I dwelt, but I refused the Blessings of eternal Life, and the Offers of saving Grace. I turn'd my Back upon the Ways of Holiness which led to Life, and renounced the Tenders of divine Mercy: I chose the Paths of Sin, and Folly, and Madness, though I knew they led to everlasting Misery and Death. Wretch that I was, to chuse those Sins and these Sorrows, though I knew they were necessarily join'd together! I am sent into those Regions of Misery which I chose for myself, against all the kind Admonitions and Warnings of God and Christ, of his Gospel and his Ministers of Grace! O these cursed Eyes of mine, that led me into the Snares

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“ of Guilt and Folly ! these Cursed Hands that practised
 “ Iniquity with Greediness ! these cursed Lips of mine,
 “ which dishonour’d my Maker ! O these cursed Appetites
 “ and Passions, and this obstinate Will, which have wro’t
 “ my Ruin ! This cursed Body and Soul that have procur’d
 “ their own everlasting Wretchedness !” These Thoughts
 will be like a gnawing Worm within, which will prey upon
 the Spirit for ever. The fretting Smart arising from this
 vexatious Worm must be painful in the highest Extreme,
 when we know it as *a Worm which will never die*, which will
 for ever hang at our Heart, and sting our Vitals in the most
 tender and sensible Parts of them without Intermission, as
 well as without End.

Here on Earth the Stings and Scourges of Conscience
 meet with some Intervals of Relief, from necessary Business
 which employs the Mind, from gay Company which diverts
 the Heart, from the Refreshments of Nature by Day, or
 from the sweet Repose of the returning Night : But in the
 World to come every Hour shall be filled up with these cut-
 ting Sorrows, for there is no Season of Refreshment, no
 Diversion of Mind, no Sleeping there : All Things are for
 ever awake in that World ; there are no Shadows and Dark-
 ness to hide us where this Torment shall not find us, for it is
 bred and lives within. There is no Couch there to lull the
 Conscience into soft Repose, and to permit the Sufferer to
 forget his Agonies. Ancient Crimes shall rise up and stand
 for ever before the Eyes of the Sinner in all their glaring
 Forms, and all their heinous aggravating Circumstances :
 These will sit heavy upon the Spirit with teasing and eter-
 nal Vexation. O dreadful State of an immortal Creature,
 which must for ever be its own Tormentor, and shall know
 no Relief thro’ all the Ages of its Immortality ! Think of this
 bitter Anguish of Soul, O Sinner, to guard thee from Sin in
 an Hour of strong Temptation.

II. Another Spring of this Torment will be the *overwhelm-
 ing Sense of an angry God, and utter Despair of his Love which
 is lost for ever*. It was the Thought of the Displeasure of
 God, which pierced the Soul of *David* with such acute Pain,
 when he remember’d his Sins, *Psal. li. 3. 4. My Sin is ever
 before me : Against thee, against thee only have I sinned, and I
 have done this Evil in thy Sight : And again he pleads with
 God, Psal. vi. 1. O Lord, chasten me not in thine Anger, nor vex*
 me

me in thy sore Displeasure. He could face an Host of armed Men without fear, but he could not face an angry God, whose loving Kindness is Life, and the loss of whose Love is worse than Death. *Psal. lxxvii. 3. I remember'd God, said he, and was troubled, i. e. lest he should be favourable no more, and shut up his tender Mercies in everlasting Anger.* This was the Terror of that good Man, under a deep Sense of his Crimes, and of God hiding his Face from him, and this even while he was in the Land of the Living, and was not cast out beyond all Hope.

But when the Grave shuts its Mouth on the Sinner, and he is thrust out into utter Darknes, where the Light of God's Countenance never shines, nor will shine, how unsupportable must such Anguish be ?

Here in this Life perhaps a profane Wretch has imagined he could live well enough *without God in the World*, and was content to have nothing to do with him in a way of Worship or Dependance here : He determined with himself, that the less he could think of God the better, and so forgot his Maker Days without number : But in those Regions of Hell, whither the Sinner shall be driven, he can never forget an angry God, nor fly out of the reach of his Terrors.

" I am now convinced, saith he, but too late, that Happiness dwells in his Presence, and Rivers of Pleasure flow at his right Hand ; but this Happiness I shall never see, these Streams of Pleasure I shall never taste ; he is gone for ever with all his Love and with all his Blessings, God is gone with all his Graces and Pardons beyond my reach : He stands afar off from my Groanings. He told me of it heretofore in the Ministry of his Word ; but, Wretch that I was ! I would not hearken, I would not believe : I was invited by the Son of his Love to receive his Gospel, and to partake of forgiving Mercy ; he stretched out his Hands with divine Compassion, and offer'd to receive my Soul to his Grace, and to wash away my Defilements with his own Blood ; he beseeched me to repent and return to God, and assured me he would secure his Father's Favour to me, and a Place among the Mansions of his Glory : But cursed Rebel that I was, to despise this Salvation, and resist the Offers of such Love, and to renounce such divine Compassion ! These Offers of

1 2

" Mercy

“ Mercy are for ever finished, I shall never see him more as
 “ surrounded with the Blessings of his Grace, but as the
 “ Minister of his Father’s Justice, and the Avenger of his
 “ abused Mercy. There is no other Saviour, no other In-
 “ tercessor to procure divine Favour for me, and my Hopes
 “ are overwhelmed and buried in the eternal Despair of
 “ his Love.

III. There will be found also among the Damned a constant Enmity, and Malice, and Hatred against the blessed God, which can never satisfy nor ease itself by Revenge. It seems very strange indeed that a Creature should design Revenge against his Maker ; but thus it is in these dismal Regions of Hell : Every wicked Man is by Nature at Enmity with God, and in a State of Rebellion ; and when this Enmity is wrought up to Malice, under a Sense of his punishing Hand, then arises that cursed and detestable Desire in the Soul of revenging itself against its Maker. The fallen Angels those wicked Spirits, have found this dismal Temper of Mind reigning in them : They hate the blessed God with intense Malice, because his governing Justice sees fit to punish their Pride and other Iniquities, and they would fain be revenged of him by destroying Mankind who were made after his Image : Their Malice cannot reach him in the Heights of his Glory, but they can reach Man his Creature made in his Likeness, and they began to take their Revenge there near six thousand Years ago. All the Sins, and all the Miseries of the Sons and Daughters of Adam, from the Beginning of the World to this Day, are owing to this Madness of Malice, this Hatred of God in the Hearts of evil Angels, who were cast out from Heaven and the Regions of Happiness : They began to exert this Malice early, and still they are everlasting Tempters of Men, in order to avenge themselves upon a righteous God.

But alas, what a wretched Satisfaction must the damned Spirits of Men propose to themselves in such a wild and extravagant Attempt ? The very Name and Mention of this Iniquity seems to put our Souls and our Ears to pain, while we dwell in Flesh and Blood ; but as cursed and hateful a Temper as this is, it is the very Spirit and Temper of apostate Angels ; and this will be thy Temper and thy Spirit, O wilful and impenitent Sinner, when thou shalt have obli-
 nately

nately sinned thyself into Damnation, and canst never deliver thyself from the punishing Hand of God.

Think, O my Soul, at what a dreadful Distance such Creatures must be from every Glimpse of Peace and Happiness, whose Hearts are filled with such Blasphemy and Rage, and who would be attempting such vain and impious Efforts of mingled Insolence and Madness. Read, O ye foolish and wilful Transgressors, read the Temper and Conduct of Devils in their Spite and Opposition to every thing of God thro' all the Books of the Old Testament and the New, and remember and think, that such will your Temper be when you also shall be banished from the Presence of God for your wilful Rebellions, as the fallen Angels are, and be for ever shut out from all the Blessings of his Love, and all Hope of his Favour.

IV. A further Spring of continued Torment is *such fixed and eternal Hardness of Heart as will never be soften'd, such Impenitence and Obstinacy of Soul which will never relent or submit.* The hardest Sinner here on Earth may now and then feel a relenting Moment, and the most daring Atheist may sometimes have a softening Thought come across him, which may perhaps bring a Tear into his Eyes; and may form a good Wish or two in his Soul, and wring a Groan from his Heart which looks like Repentance; but when we are dismissed from this Body, and this State of Trial and of Hope, eternal Hardness seizes upon the Mind: The Neck is like an iron Sinew harden'd more (if I may so express it) in the Fire of Hell. The Will is fixed in everlasting Obstinacy against God, and against the Glories of his Holiness. If *Moses* and the Prophets, if *Christ* and his Apostles in the Ministry of the Word could not soften the Heart of bold Transgressors, what can be expected when all the Means of Grace and the Methods of divine Compassion are vanished and gone for ever?

'Tis granted indeed there will be bitter Repentance among the Damned in Hell, and inward Vexation of Soul and Self-cursing in abundance, for having plunged themselves into this Misery, and having abandon'd all the Offers of divine Mercy: But it will be only such a Repentance as *Judas* the Traitor felt, when *he repented and hanged himself*: This is a sort of Madness of Rage within them for having made themselves miserable. But there will be found

no Hatred of the Evil of Sin, as it is an Offence against God, no painful and relenting Sense of their Iniquity, as it has dishonour'd God and broken his Law, no such Sorrow for Sin as is intended with an hearty Aversion to it, and a Desire to love God and obey him ; but rather they will feel and nourish a growing Aversion to God and his Holiness.

Ask yourselves, my young Friends, Did you never feel your Hearts indulging an angry and unrelenting Mood, and stubborn in your Wrath against a Superior who had sharply reprov'd you ? Or have you never felt an obstinate and unreconcilable Hour in your younger Years, even against a Parent who had severely corrected you ? Or have you not found, in some Seasons, your Soul rising and kindling into violent Resentment and a revengeful Temper against your Neighbour upon some supposed Affront, Damage, or Mischief he had done you ? Call these unhappy Minutes to Mind, and learn what *Hell* is : Think into what a wretched Case you would be plunged, if this Wrath and Stubbornness, this Enmity and Hardness should become immortal and unchangeable, though it were but against a Neighbour : But if this Obstinacy and stubborn Hardiness of Soul were bent against God himself, so that you would never relent, never sincerely repent of your Crimes, nor bow, nor melt, nor yield either to his Majesty or his Mercy, what would you think of yourselves and of your State ? Would you not be wretched and horrible Creatures indeed without the least Reason to hope for Favour and Compassion at his Hands ? Such is the Case probably of every damned Sinner. Amazing Scene of complicated Misery and Rebellion ! A guilty Spirit which cannot repent ! A rebellious Spirit which cannot submit, even to God himself ? A harden'd Soul that cannot bend nor yield to its Maker ! Must not such a Wretch be for ever the Object of its own inward Torment, as well as of divine Punishment ? O the hopeless and dreadful State of every bold Transgressor, that is gone down to Death without true Repentance ; for, sincere and true Repentance for having offended God, and ingenuous Relentings of Heart for Sin are never found in those Regions of future Misery ! No kindly Meltings of Soul toward God are ever known there.

V. There will be also *intense Sorrow and wild Impatience at the Loss of present Comforts without any Recompence, and*
without

without any Relief. If this World, O sinful Creature, with the Riches, or the Honours, or the Pleasures of it be all thy chosen Happiness, what universal Grief and Vexation will overspread all the Powers of thy Nature, when thou shalt be torn away from them all, even from all thy Happinesses by Death, and have nothing come in the room of them, nothing to relieve thy piercing Grief, nothing to divert or amuse this Vexation, nothing to sooth or ease this eternal Pain at the Heart ?

And yet further, when thou shalt be as the Prophet speaks, *like a wild Bull in a Net*, struggling and tossing to and fro to free thyself on all sides, when thou shalt be racked with inward Fretfulness and Impatience, and *full of the Fury of the Lord* that made thee, and *the Rebuke of that God* that punishes thee, *Isai. li. 20.* Then shall thy Heart, hard as it is in an obstinate Course of Sin, be ready to burst and break, not with Penitence, but Madness and over-swelling Sorrows : And yet it must not break nor dissolve, but will remain firm and hard for ever to suffer these Pangs. This is and must be an eternal Heart-ach, for there are no broken Hearts in Hell in any Sense whatsoever. There the Eyes are weeping, and the Hands are wringing, and the Tongue almost dried with long Wailings and Outcries, and the Teeth gnashing with Madness of Thought : This is our Saviour's frequent Representation of Hell, *There shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth*; and yet the Heart ever living and ever obstinate, to supply fresh Springs of these Sorrows, and to feel the Anguish of them all.

VI. There will be also *raging Desires of Ease and Pleasure which shall never be satisfy'd*, together with *perpetual Disappointment and endless Confusion* thrown upon all their Schemes and their Efforts of Hope. It is the Nature of Man, while it continues in Being, that it must desire Happiness, and make some Efforts towards it : And some Divines have supposed, that Men of wicked Sensuality and Luxury in this World, have so drenched their Souls in fleshly Appetite by indulging their Lusts, and placing their chief Satisfaction and Happiness therein, that they will carry this very Temper of Sensuality with them into the World of Spirits ; and 'tis possible their raging Appetites to this sensual Happiness, may be increased while there are no Objects to gratify them : Now if this be the Case, it must be intense

and constant Misery to feel eternal Hunger with no Bread to relieve it ; keen Desire of Dainties with no luxurious Dishes to please their humorous Taste ; eternal Thirst without one Drop of Wine or Water to allay or cool it ; eternal Fatigue and Weariness without Power to sleep, and eternal Lust of Pleasure without any Hope of Gratification.

But if we should suppose these Sensualities shall die together with the Body, yet this is certain, the Soul will have everlasting Appetites of its own, *i. e.* the general Desire of Ease and Happiness, and of some satisfying Good ; But God, who is the only true Source of Happiness to Spirits, the only satisfying Portion of Souls, is for ever departed and gone ; and thus the natural Appetite of Felicity will be ever wakeful and violent in damned Spirits, while every Attempt or Hope to satisfy it will meet with perpetual Disappointment.

Milton, our great *English* Poet, has represented this Part of the Misery of Devils in a beautiful manner. He supposes that ever since they tempted Man to Sin by the forbidden Tree of Knowledge, they are once a Year changed into the Form of Serpents, and brought by Millions into a Grove of such Trees, with the same golden Appearance of Fruit upon them : And while with eager Appetite they seize those fair Appearances to allay their Thirst and Hunger, instead of Fruit they chew nothing but bitter Ashes, and reject the hateful Taste with spattering Noise ; and still they repeat their Attempts with shameful Disappointment, till they are vexed, and tormented, and torn with meagre Famine, and then are permitted to resume the Shape of Devils again. And why may we not suppose that the Crimes, of which the wicked Children of Men have been guilty in the present Life, may be punished with some such kind of Pain and Confusion, both of Body and Soul, as is here represented in this poetic Emblem or Parable ?

VII. Another Misery of damned Creatures is, that vexing Envy which arises against the Saints in Glory, and which shall never be appeased or gratify'd. The Blessed in Heaven shall be for ever blessed, and the Envy of Devils and of damned Souls shall never hurt their Felicity, nor see their Joys diminished. This vile Passion of those cursed Spirits therefore against the blessed Inhabitants of Heaven, tho' it

rage

rage never so high, is only preying upon their own Hearts, and increasing their own inward Anguish.

Let us imagine how many thousand holy Souls are arrived safe at Paradise, who were surrounded with mean and low Circumstances here upon Earth, while their haughty Lords, and their rich insolent Neighbours, have sinned themselves into Hell: And do you think those Children of Pride can ever bear this Sight without Envy? How many Martyrs have ascended to Glory from Racks, and Tortures, and Fires, here upon Earth, while their bloody and cruel Persecutors have been working out their own Damnation by these Inhuman Acts of Murder and Cruelty? And will not these Wretches, under their righteous Sufferings and Punishments in Hell, envy the Creatures whom they have scorned, and oppressed, and murdered here on Earth, when they shall see them placed on high Seats in the Kingdom of Heaven, and themselves cast into utter Darknes?

And what does all this Envy do but increase their own Wretchedness? They are distracted with Pride and Rage to think of these high Favours of the blessed God bestow'd on Creatures, whom they treated once with utmost Disdain: But their Envy, like a Viper, preys upon their own Entrails, and shall never be allay'd or made easy: They send a thousand Curses up to the heavenly World; but the Saints are for ever secured in Happiness under the Eye of God their heavenly Father, and the Care of *Jesus* their Almighty Friend.

O what a painful Plague must this Envy be, when with all her invenom'd Whips and Stings she does but scourge and torment the Heart where she dwells? What an unspeakable Torture must it be to feel this Envy so violent and so constant, that it gives itself no Ease through everlasting Ages? Who is there that dwells in Flesh and Blood can conceive or express the Horror and the twinging Agonies that arise from such a hateful Passion, fermenting and raging thro' all the Powers of the Soul?

VIII. The last Thing I shall mention, as Part of those Punishments of Hell which affect the Spirit, is a *perpetual Expectation and Dread of new and increasing Punishments without End*; and it is highly probable, that this shall be the Portion of Multitudes. When the Souls of the Saints are released

released by Death, and arrive at the blessed Regions, they are not vested with all their brightest Glories in a Moment, nor fixed in the highest Point of Knowledge and Happiness at their first Entrance; but as their Knowledge and their Love increases, so their Capacities are enlarged to take in new Scenes and new Degrees of Pleasure, and 'tis probable that their Felicity shall be ever increasing. And in the same manner, it is not unlikely, that the increasing Sins, the growing Wickedness, and mad Rebellion of damned Spirits, may bring upon them new Judgments and more weighty Vengeance. So it was with *Pharaoh* the *Egyptian* Tyrant, when he remained obstinate and rebellious against the Messages of God by *Moses*, even while he and his Nation lay under smarting Scourges of the Almighty: How did his Plagues increase with his Iniquities? And he may be set before us as an Emblem of Sinners, and their Sufferings, under the Wrath of God in Hell, as in *Rom. ix. 17, 18.*

Or perhaps as the Wicked of this World when they die, have left evil and pernicious Examples behind them, or have corrupted the Morals of their Neighbours by their Enticements, or their Commands, or by their wicked Influence of any kind, so their Punishment may be increased in proportion to the lasting Effects of their vile Example, or their vicious Influences. And perhaps too, there are none among all the Ranks of the Damned, whose Souls will be filled so high with the Dread and Horror of increasing Woes, as leud and profane Writers, profane and immoral Princes, or cruel Persecutors of Religion. *Jeroboam*, the King, not only sinned himself grievously, but *who made Israel to sin*, as the Scripture frequently expresses it with an Emphasis, by setting up the Idolatry of Calves in the Land, *1 Kings xiv, and 15, and 16.* His Ghost stood fair for such an Increase of Torment from Age to Age, as his Idolatry prevailed further in the Land. And all the wanton Poets and the vile Persecutors, whether of *Heathen* or of *Christian* Name, whose Writings, whose Example, or whose Laws have convey'd and propagated their Wickedness from Age to Age after their Decease, will be some of these wretched Expectants of new and increasing Punishment.

Have a Care, O ye witty and ye mighty Sinners! have a Care of setting vile Temptations and bad Examples before

fore the Men of your Age ! have a Care of spreading the Contagion of your Vices around you by the Softness and the Force of your Allurements ! Have a Care of establishing Iniquity by a Law, and propagating loose and wicked Opinions, or of encouraging Persecution for Conscience-sake ! Take heed lest the cursed Influence of your Crimes should descend from Generation to Generation, among the Living long after you are dead, and should call for new and sharper Strokes from the punishing Hand of the Almighty !

But suppose there were nothing else but the long dreadful View of the Eternity of their present Miseries, with an everlasting Despair of Ease or Deliverance, this would add unspeakably to their Torment : The constant Sensation of what they feel now, and the Dread of what they must feel, is sufficient to make their Wretchedness intolerable.

If all these Springs of Misery which I have already mention'd are, and will be found in the Souls of damned Sinners, there is no need of more to make them exquisitely miserable : And yet since their Bodies shall be raised from the Dust, in order to be join'd with their Souls in Punishment, as they were united in Sin, why may we not suppose that the Great God will create Bodies for them of such an unhappy Mould and Contexture, as shall be another perpetual Source of Pain and Anguish ? What if their Bodies shall be raised with all the Seeds of Disease in them, like the Gout or the Stone, or any more smarting Malady ? And what if the Smart of these bodily Distempers should mingle with the raging Passions of the Mind, as far as it is consistent with Immortality and everlasting Duration ? Who can say, that when God exerts *his Power, and makes his Wrath known*, in punishing obstinate, rebellious and impenitent Sinners, as *Rom. ix.* he will not frame such Bodies for them to dwell in, as shall be a hateful Burthen, and an incessant Plague to them through all Ages of their Duration ? And perhaps these bodily Pains may be also included in the Metaphor of a *gnawing Worm*, bred within them, *which shall never die*, which shall never cease to fill them with grievous Anguish.

Here perhaps it may be enquired, Are there not Multitudes of Men in this World, who are not Sinners of the grosser kind, but have lived, in the main, in the Practice of common social Duties, and have maintain'd the usual
Forms

Forms of Religion, according to the outward Rules of the Gospel, and the Custom of their Nation, but they have been negligent indeed of any sincere Repentance towards God, and have been Strangers to inward vital Religion throughout their whole Course? Shall these Creatures, who seem to stand in a sort of indifferent Character, who are outwardly blameless, with regard to common Morality, and have exercised the common Virtues of Justice and Benevolence towards their Fellow-Creatures, perhaps under the Influences of Education or Custom, or perhaps by the Effect that Reason or Philosophy, or their inward Fears have had toward the Restraint of their Passions and Appetites; I say, shall such sort of Creatures as these be filled with those Furies of Rage and Resentment against God, Envy and Malice toward their Fellow-Sinners, and all the vile and unsociable Passions in these Regions of Misery which they have never found working in them here on Earth, or but in a low Degree? Shall all the Torments and inward Anguish of Soul that you have been describing, fall upon this Rank of Sinners, whom the Eye of the World could hardly distinguish from *good* Men, and who were very far from the Character of *wicked*?

I answer, 1st, That however there may seem to be three sorts of Persons in our esteem, viz: the *Good*, the *Bad*, and the *Indifferent*, yet the Word of God seems to acknowledge but two sorts, (viz.) *Those who fear God and serve him, and those who fear him not*, Mal. iii. 18. Those who have acted from Principles of inward Religion, or the Love of God, and those who had no such Principle within them: And therefore the Scripture reveals and declares but two sorts of States in the future World, (viz. that of *Rewards* and *Punishments*, or that of *Happiness* and *Misery*: And as God the righteous Judge is intimately acquainted with all the secret Principles and Workings of every Heart, he alone knows who have practised Virtue sincerely from pious Principles, and who have had no such Principles within them. He well distinguishes who they are that have comply'd with the Rules of the Dispensation under which they have lived, or who have not comply'd with it: And such as may have the good Esteem of Men may be highly offensive to
God

God, who knows all Things, and may be worthy of his final Punishment; *the Judge of the whole Earth will do right* *.

And since he has declared it to be his Rule of Judgment, that *he will reward every one according to their Works*, and it shall be much more tolerable for some of those Creatures than it shall be for others, by reason of their lesser Crimes, or their nearer Approaches to Virtue and Piety, so it is certain he will act in perfect Justice and Equity towards every Criminal, and none shall be punished above their Demerits, tho' no impenitent Sinner shall go unpunished.

We do not therefore imagine that every condemned Criminal shall have the same Degree of inward raging Passions, the same Madness and Fury against God and their Fellow-Creatures, nor the same Anguish of Conscience as those who have been more grossly and obstinately wicked and vicious, and have wilfully refused and renounced the well-known Offers of Grace and Salvation: There are innumerable Degrees of inward Punishment and Pain, according to the Degrees of Sin.

Ans. 2. It should be added too, that that World of Punishment is also a World of increasing Wickedness, and those that have had some natural Virtues and some Appearances of Goodness here, may and will renounce it all in the World to come, where they find themselves punished for their Impenitence and Irreligion, and their criminal Neglect of God and Godliness: And the least and lightest of the Punishments of damned Souls will be terrible enough, and yet not surpass the Desert of their Offences. They have been all in greater or less Degrees treasuring up Food for this immortal *Worm*, and Fuel for this *Fire*, which is unquenchable.

Besides, it may be added here, that in *Threatnings* the holy Scripture generally expresses them in their highest

* It has been the Opinion of some Writers in elder and in later Times, that the vast Numbers of indifferent Persons, who have neither been evidently holy or evidently wicked, shall be sent to a new State of Trial in the other World; but I can find nothing of this Doctrine in the Bible, nor any Hint of it, unless in that obscure Text of St. Peter, Epist. 1. ch. iii. 19. where Christ is said to go and preach to the Spirits of those Sinners who were drown'd in the Flood of Noah, which may be construed to another Sense with Truth and Justice.

Degrees and most formidable Appearances, on purpose to secure Men from coming near the Peril and Border of them.

This shall suffice to explain the first Part of the Metaphor in my Text, *i. e. The Worm that dieth not.*

SECTION II.

The Fire which shall not be quenched.

I proceed now to consider the *second* Part of the Description of *Hell* in the *Nature* of it, as it is represented by our Saviour, and that is, that *the Fire is never quenched.*

Fire signifies the Medium or Instrument of Torture *from without*, which God has threatned to employ in the Punishment of guilty Creatures, even as the *gnawing Worm* signifies their *inward* Torment. Fire applied to the sensible and tender Parts of the Flesh, gives the sharpest Pain of any Thing that comes within our common Notice, and 'tis used in Scripture to signify the Punishments of damned Sinners, and the Wrath of God in the World to come : And perhaps that Text is the Foundation of it, *Isa. xxx. last Verse, Tophet is ordained of old, he has made it deep and large, the Pile thereof is Fire and much Wood, and the Breath of the Lord, like a Stream of Brimstone, doth kindle it.* This Tophet was a Place in the Valley of *Hinnom*, where Children were wont to be burnt in Sacrifice to the Idol *Moloch* ; and from these *Hebrew Words*, *Hell* in the New Testament is called *Geenna*, because of the burning Torture and the terrible Shrieks of dying Children in this Valley of *Hinnom*.

This Description of *Hell* by *Fire* is used by our Saviour and his Apostles, in their Speeches and Writings on this Subject. *Hell-Fire* is mention'd six Times in six Verses where my Text lies ; the last Sentence of Judgment passed upon Sinners, as it is represented by our Saviour, is express'd in the same Language, *Matth. xxv. 41. Depart, ye Cursed, into everlasting Fire.* The Apostle Paul speaking of the Return of Christ, *2 Theff. i. 8.* asserts, that *he shall appear in flaming Fire, to take Vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel* : And in *Rev. xiv. 10, 11.* as well as in other Parts of this Book, the final Punishments of Sinners is represented by *Fire and Brimstone*, as the Instruments of their Torment.

'Tis true indeed, Spirits or Beings which have no Body cannot feel burning by material Fire, unless they are united to some sort of material Vehicles ; but that God will use material

Fire

Fire to punish obstinate and rebellious Sinners hereafter at the Resurrection, is not improbable, tho' 'tis very hard to say with full Assurance : Since the Bodies of the Wicked are to be raised again, it is not at all unlikely that their Habitation shall be a Place of Fire, and their Bodies may be made immortal to endure the Smart and Torture without consuming. Did not this God, by his Almighty Power and Mercy, preserve the Bodies of *Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego* in the burning Furnace of *Nebuchadnezzar*, so that the Fire had no Power to consume or destroy them? And cannot his Power do the same thing under the Influence of his Justice as well as of his Mercy? May they not be maintain'd for ever in their Existence to endure the appointed and deserved Vengeance? If the blessed God has *with much long-suffering borne with these Vessels of Wrath*, under their repeated Oppositions to his Law and Gospel, and they still go on in their Vice, Obstinacy and Impenitence, and have *fitted themselves for Destruction*, surely he will *make his Wrath and Power known* in their Punishment, as *St. Paul* expresses it, *Rom. ix.* and when the Power and Wrath of a God unite to punish a Creature, how miserable must that Creature be?

'Tis certain, that God has been pleas'd in his Word frequently to make use of *Fire, Brimstone, Burning, Smoak, Darknes* and *Chains*, and every thing that is painful and noisome to Nature on Earth, in order to represent the Miseries that he has prepared for Sinners in Hell : And we must suppose that all these Metaphors, if they are but mere Metaphors, carry with them a Sense of most intense Pain and Anguish with which God will afflict the Bodies, as well as the Spirits of those guilty Creatures, who have rebelled against his Majesty, rejected his Mercy, and expos'd themselves to his Indignation. But what particular Instruments and Methods of Punishment, what other Elements or Means of Torture the Great God will make use of to execute his Sentence in this tremendous Work, is more than we can now declare, because God has not fully declared it : And I pray God none of us may be ever doomed to learn it by terrible Experience. But if there be nothing but *Fire*, the Anguish will be intolerable, as one of our Poets expresses it,

*In liquid Burnings, or on dry, to dwell,
Is all the sad Variety of Hell.*

Or

Or what if the Almighty, who has all Nature, with all its Powers, at his Command, should employ other material Instruments for the Execution of his deserved Wrath? What if he should chuse the alternate Extremes of Fire and Frost, as some have imagin'd, to torment those impenitent Criminals? Or what if the Creatures which they have abus'd to their impious and brutish Purposes, should be made Instruments and Mediums of their Punishment? Wine may be render'd a frequent Means of Sickness, Agony and Pain to the Drunkard, and Meat and other Dainties to the Glutton, and Gold to the Covetous Wretches who made Gold their God, that they may all remember their Crimes in their Sufferings. The Wisdom of God will execute the Sentence of his Justice in the most honourable manner.

And after all, if we call away our Thoughts from Fire, and every material Instrument of Pain, which the Great God may employ in punishing obstinate Rebels, and survey only those acute and dreadful Impressions of Horror and Anguish, which a just and holy God may make on sinful Spirits in an immediate manner in Hell, this would overwhelm our Souls with unsupportable Agonies: *Who knows the Power of thine Anger? for according to thy Fear so is thy Wrath*, says Moses, Psal. xc. Our Fears do not rise above those Evils which the Wrath of God will inflict. Who knows what are those *Arrows of the Almighty*, of which *Job* speaks, *the Poison whereof drank up his Spirits*, and *those Terrors of God which set themselves in array against him*? Who knows what our Saviour felt in the Hour of his Agony and Atonement for our Sins, which made him sweat Drops of Blood? And what sort of terrible Impressions God himself may make of his own Wrath and Vengeance, on the Heart of such Criminals as wilfully reject his Salvation, is beyond our Thots to conceive, or our Language to express.

Thus much shall suffice concerning the Metaphor of Fire, and the Hand of God himself in kindling this Fire for the Execution of his Sentence against Impenitents. But since I have enter'd so far into this Subject, I cannot think it proper intirely to finish it, without giving notice of some different and dreadful Additions to their Torment which will arise from *evil Angels*, and from their *Companions in Sin* and Misery among the *Children of Men*: For in the Agonies of our Saviour, Men and Devils join'd together to afflict him,
when

when it pleased the Father to bruise him, and to make his Soul an Offering for our Sins.

I. *Evil Angels, wicked and unclean Spirits, with all their furious Dispositions and active Powers, will increase the Misery of the Damned.* They paved the way to Hell for Man by the first Temptation of our Parents in Paradise, and they have been ever since busy in tempting the Children of Men to sin, and they will be hereafter as busy in giving them Torment. When these wicked Spirits, O Sinner, who have taken thee as a willing Captive by their Baits and Devices in this World, when they have led thee down thro' the Paths of Vice to the Regions of Sorrow, they will begin then to insult thee with hateful Reproaches, and to triumph over thee with Insolence and Scorn. When they have deceived thee on Earth, to thy own Perdition, they will make thee the Object of their bitter Ridicule and Mockery in Hell.

O could we turn aside the Veil of the invisible World, and hold the bottomless Pit open before you, what bitter Groans of Ghosts would you hear, not only oppress'd and agonizing under the Wrath of a righteous God, but also under the Insults of cruel Devils? *As there is Joy among the Angels of Heaven when a Sinner repents, or when a Soul arrives safely at those blessed Mansions;* so when a rebellious and obstinate Criminal is sent down to Hell, you would hear the Triumphs of those malicious Spirits over him, with the Voice of insulting Pride and hellish Joy: And while they domineer over you, and tear you as roaring Lions, who seek and tear their Prey, you will curse yourselves a thousand Times for hearkening to their deceitful Allurements. You will vent your Rage against yourselves at the same time that they scoff at you as eternal Fools, who have lost a God, and a Heaven, and immortal Happiness, by your own Madness and Folly in hearkening to their Temptation.

II. *The mutual Upbraidings of Fellow-Sinners and Fellow-Sufferers among the Children of Men, will aggravate your Wretchedness Day and Night without End.* Those who drew each other into foul Iniquities, shall fill the Ears of each other with loud and sharp Reproaches for their mutual Influence on both their Ruin, and shall charge their Damnation, and all their heavy Sorrows, as a heavy Load on each other's Souls. Some of those who have been join'd in the

nearest Ties of Kindred and Friendship, while they dwell in Flesh and Blood, shall be the terrible Instruments of their keenest Remorse and Vexation, and teaze their Spirits with endless Upbraidings.

Here the *Sons of Pride*, that most hateful Iniquity, shall be overwhelm'd with huge Mortification and Disdain : The mighty Sinner shall be insulted by the meanest of the Croud; and Princes shall be bearded and Affronted by those gay Slaves of the Court, whom they once employ'd in flattering and adoring them. They were once vain enough to believe, they were something more than mortal ; but now they are spurned by those very Flatterers with a Foot of Contempt, and their eternal Pride still swelling, gives their own Hearts new Stings and Twinges at every Resentment. None but a proud and haughty Creature here in this World, who has sometimes met with Scorn and Insult from his Inferiors, can speak feelingly of the exquisite Sensibility of these Torments of Soul in Hell.

But besides this, there are many Sinners who lived in Malice, and who died with their Hearts full of Revenge against their Fellow-Sinners ; and when they shall meet them in those deplorable Regions, how natural is it to suppose they will endeavour to execute this Revenge upon them without End and without Mercy ? For it may be easily supposed that Malice, Revenge, and Cruelty, which are the proper Character of Devils, shall not be abated among the Children of Men, when they are grown so near akin in their Tempers to those evil Spirits, and are now for ever mingled amongst them.

And yet further, who knows what the Damned in Hell shall endure from the endless Brawls and bitter Quarrels among themselves ? What new Contentions will arise perpetually in such a Country, where it is perhaps the Practice and Custom of the Place, and the Nature of the Inhabitants, for the most part, to make every one of their Fellows as uneasy and as miserable as they can ? O what mad and furious Pride, and Malice, and every hellish Passion, will be raging almost in every Bosom against all those who are near them, and this in a dark Prison where all are intensely tormented, and where there is no such thing as Compassion or sincere Love, nothing to sooth each other's Sorrows, but every thing that may add to the Smart and Anguish ?

O that

O that the present survey of these Horrors of Soul, these complicated Distresses and Miseries from within us, and without us, from every Quarter of Heaven and Hell, from the *gnawing Worm* within us, and from the *Fire* of the Wrath of God, and the mutual Insults, Railings and Injuries of Men and Devils, might all lie with its due Weights upon our Spirits now, while we are in the Land of Hope; that every one of us may be awaken'd to a timely Concern about our highest Interest, and hasten to make our Escape as *Lot* did from *Sodom*, lest the Sentence of Death be pronounced upon us while we delay, and the fiery Deluge overtake us.

But here I would tarry a little to answer a repeated *Objection*, (viz.) The Terror of this *outward* Punishment from the Hand of God, which is described by *avenging Fire*, is so severe and intolerable, that it awakens some lesser Criminals to raise the same Cavil against this *unquenchable Fire*, or God's punishing Hand, as was raised before against the *never-dying Worm*, or the *inward* Anguish of Soul arising from its own Conscience.

'Tis possible some lesser Sinner, who has had more Appearances of Piety or Religion here on Earth, may rise and say, You have set the Punishments of Sin in a most horrible and tremendous Light, from this Metaphor of *Fire*, as well as from the deathless *Worm*: But surely this cannot be the Case, nor these the Sufferings which God will inflict on every wretched Creature in Hell. Are not the Punishments there proportion'd to the Offences? What if these sharpest and deepest Tortures and Horrors should be the Portion of the vilest Criminals, the most impious Rebels against God, the prophane and obstinate Abusers of Grace, the Scoffers at *Christ* and his Gospel, and the cruel Persecutors of all the Saints, yet will every Soul who had not quite Religion and Holiness enough to reach Heaven, be thus terribly tormented in Hell? Does not *Christ* himself tell us, and did you not allow before, that it shall be more tolerable for some Sinners than for others? And will there be no easier Abodes, no milder Regions, no kinder and more favourable Appointments for such as have had many good Wishes and Hopes, many friendly Exercises of Virtue towards Men, and some Workings of imperfect Piety toward God?

'To this I *answer*, as before, 'Tis certain that *every one shall be judged according to their Works*, by an unerring Rule of Equity, and shall be punished according to the Aggravation of their Iniquities. But dost thou know, O Sinner, how great is that Punishment which the least Transgression against the Law of God deserves? One single Sin, which thou wilt not part with, will create unsufferable Misery. And though there may be other Criminals there of much more heinous and aggravated Guilt, Prophaness, and Rebellion than thine is, yet if thy Soul be filled with all that Torment which one Sin may create and deserve, there will be Hell enough around thee to make thy Distress too terrible for thee to bear.

Besides, let it be remember'd, that whatsoever Tendencies toward Piety, or Appearances of Goodness, might be found with thee in this World, all these will vanish and be lost, when once thy Day of Grace is finished, and all the Means of Grace and Salvation are ended for ever. If thou hast refused the Proposals of Mercy, and continued in thy Sins without Repentance, and hast never accepted the Salvation of *Christ* while it was offer'd, all the Good *that thou seem'dst to have shall be taken from thee*, Matth. xxv. 29. or rather thy Heart itself will grow more hard, thy Will more obstinate against God, and every evil Passion will rise and prevail, and make thee perhaps as very a Devil as thy Companions in Guilt and Misery. 'Tis for those who would not part with their beloved Sins, which were as dear as *right Hands*, or as *right Eyes*, that the *never dying-Worm* and the *unquenchable Fire* are prepared, as the Context itself informs us in this Place.

And as the Worm of Conscience, even for lesser Sins, will gnaw thy Heart with intense Anguish, so the Vengeance of Divine Fire will torment thee with exquisite Pain, tho' thy Pain and thy Anguish shall not be equal to what greater Criminals endure. But 'tis wise and kind in the blessed God to denounce the Terrors and Sanctions of his Law in their utmost Severity, to guard his Law the better against every Transgression, and to frighten and secure his Creatures from Sin and Punishment.

Trifle not therefore, O Sinner, with the Means of Mercy, and venture not upon little Sins, in hope of little Misery, nor dare to continue in an impenitent State without God,
without

without *Christ*, and his Salvation, upon a foolish Presumption that thy Sins are but small, and thy Punishment shall be less than others : For the least of those Sorrows will be found greater than any mortal Creature can bear, and therefore thou shalt be made immortal to suffer them.

'Tis granted, there are many Mansions in Hell, as well as in Heaven, but as the lowest Mansion in Heaven is Happiness, so the easiest Place in Hell is Misery.

There is another *Objection* arises here which it is necessary to give some Answer to ; *viz.* If the Punishments of Hell are so intense and terrible, between the Worm of Conscience, the Fire of God's Anger, and the Malice of evil Spirits, surely it will work up human Nature into Extasy and Madness ; it will take away all the regular Exercise of our natural Powers ; it will render us perhaps mere passive miserable Beings, of keen Sensations without reasoning. This is certain, that such and so various Tortures would have that Influence upon our Natures at present, and why should it not hereafter ? And will the blessed God continue to punish Creatures when their Reason is lost ? What can such Punishments avail ?

I answer, surely God will not continue to punish Madmen ; therefore none of these Torments shall extinguish our Reason, or destroy our intellectual Powers ; for it is as Creatures of Reason and Free-will that Sinners are thus punished, and therefore these Powers must remain in their proper Exercise ; besides, the very Operations of these Powers in Self-condemnation, and Self-upbraiding, are part of their Punishment. But whether God will so fortify the Natures of the Damned, which probably shall not be made of Flesh and Blood, and enable them to bear such intense Pain without Distraction, or whether the highest Extrems of their Torment shall only be inflicted at some certain Periods or Intervals, so that they shall soon return to their reasoning Powers again, with bitter Remembrance of what passed, this Matter is hard to determine ; and because it is unwritten and unrevealed, I am silent. But it still remains that Punishment shall be so intense and severe, as becomes a God of Holiness and Justice to inflict on rebellious and obstinate Creatures.

SECTION III.

Reflections on the Nature of these Punishments.

'Tis time now that we should proceed to form some special *Reflections on the Nature of the Punishments of Hell*, such as they have been described in the foregoing Discourse.

The *first* is this, *What dreadful and unknown Evil is contain'd in the Nature of Sin which grows up into such Misery*, which breeds this stinging Worm in the Conscience, which prepares the Creature for such fiery Torments, and which provokes a God to inflict them? The *Vessels of Wrath* have prepar'd themselves for it, as the Apostle intimates, by their own Sins, *Rom. ix. 22. they are fitted for Destruction*: Nor does all the intense and infinite Anguish of this Punishment exceed the Desert of our Sins. The Great God, in a way of Bounty, may often bestow upon us vastly beyond what our little Services can ever pretend to have deserved, but he never punishes beyond our Deserts.

What a dangerous and pernicious Mistake is it in the Children of Men to sport with Sin, as with a harmless thing? 'Tis much safer sporting with a poisonous Serpent, or with burning Firebrands. The Serpent has many gay and pleasing Colours on its Skin, and appears a very charming Creature, which tempts Children and Fools to play with it: And the same Ignorance inclines them sometimes to sport with Fire, because of its shining Brightness: And till they are burnt with the Fire, or bit by the Serpent, they will not forsake their foolish Choice, nor be convinced of their Danger: Such is the Case and Temper of sinful Mortals: Their Senses indulge the pleasing Flatteries of Sin, and are fond of its tempting Amusements, till they feel the Smart of the Fire raging in their Bosoms, and the Adder stings them to Death. Thus the wise Man describes the Flatteries of Wine in the View of the Drunkard, *Prov. xxiii. 31, 32*. But the same wise Man pronounces every one a Fool that makes a mock at Sin, or trifles with so formidable a Mischief, *Prov. xiv. 9*.

How vain are the gay Fancies of sinful Men in the Hour of Temptation, and how shocking and dreadful will be their Disappointment? They think the Descriptions of Sin, which are blown up and kindled into such Terror by the Lips of the Preacher, are but as Mock-fire which never burns; but the great Day of Vengeance which makes haste
towards

towards them, will terribly and eternally convince them of the fatal Mischief of it by the various Plagues that shall seize upon them. The living *Worm* shall gnaw their Consciences, and the *Fire* of God will torment their Spirits, and spread a raging Anguish through their whole Natures; and every twinging Accent of their Pain shall teach them, but with a terrible and hopeless Conviction, *what unspeakable Evil is contained in Sin.* They will then find what *a fearful thing it is to fall into the Hands of the living God*, who has a Right, and Power, and Will to punish, *Heb. x. 31.*

O that each of us might arrive at this holy Wisdom, to learn the dreadful *Evil of Sin* from this Bible, this Book of the divine Law and Grace, and not provoke the blessed God to teach us so necessary a Lesson by the Rod of his Vengeance! O that we could look upon every unlawful Action, and particularly every Sin against Conscience, as the Seed of that Worm which will gnaw our Souls in Hell with intense Pain, as Part of that Fuel which is kindling into a Flame to torment our Consciences for ever, and that under the powerful Influences of these Representations of Sin we might fly to the utmost Distance from it with Horror, and make our safe Escape!

Reflect. II. If the Punishments of Hell, appointed by the blessed God, carry so much Terror in them, *how much mistaken are the sinful Children of Men in the Ideas which they form of the great and Blessed God?* This Representation of the Vengeance of the Lord in Hell may be of use to refute such mistaken Opinions.

Some have framed a God for themselves; not such as dwells in the Heavens, not such as he has described himself in his Word, but their vain Imagination has raised up an Idol made of mere Goodness and Mercy, without Holiness and Justice: 'Tis their own Self-love which forms this idle and foolish Image of the God that made them, because they do not like to think of falling under the Terror of his Power. They venture to affront him to his Face, they dare him to Vengeance; and as the Writer of the Book of *Job* expresses it, *they stretch out their Hands against God, they strengthen themselves against the Almighty, they run upon him with Insolence, and venture upon the thick Bosses of his Buckler,* Job xv. 25. There are Multitudes in our Day that are arrived at such a dreadful Height of Impiety, as to call upon him

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for

for the Damnation of themselves, as well as of their Friends, in Sport and Merriment : They will not believe that the blessed God will ever be found so severe and formidable as Preachers describe him : And *because Judgment is not speedily executed* against the Men of Iniquity, *therefore the Sons of Men have their Hearts set in them to do Mischief.* *Madness is in their Hearts,* Eccles. viii. 11. and ix. 3. Because God delays his Indignation they will not believe he has any belonging to him, notwithstanding all the terrible Words by which he is represented by the Prophets, the Apostles, and the Son of God himself : And while they rush boldly on those Crimes which God has severely forbidden, they are ready to think *God is just such an one as themselves,* regardless of Virtue and Government, *Psal. l. 21.* And because they make nothing of Sin, they imagine God will make nothing of it.

O that the Sons of Men would once learn to know God better, for *there are many who have not the true Knowledge of God, I speak it to their Shame, when they fancy he is all made up of Gentleness and Forbearance, without Holiness and Justice !* Alas, Sirs, these Attributes are as necessary in a God as Grace and Compassion : He is and he must be a wise, a righteous Governor of the World ; and his Wisdom requires that impenitent Sinners should be punished, to secure the Honour of his Law, and to guard his Gospel from Contempt *. These awful Perfections of the blessed God are as necessary to vindicate his Authority and his Government from Insult and Rebellion, as his Goodness is needful to encourage sinful Creatures to repent and return to their Duty. The Word of God expressly tells us, he is a God of *Holiness and a consuming Fire,* Heb. xii. *last* ; but there is many a Sinner that will never learn this Lesson till the Torments of Hell teach it him by dismal Experience. They

* A Governor made up of mere Goodness and Mercy could be no Governor at all ; for it is absurd to call that a Government, where every Subject may do what Iniquity and Mischief he pleases with Impunity. The Laws of such a Government would cease to be Laws, and become mere Rules and Directions for living, which every one might observe or not, just according to his Inclination. To say that it became the Wisdom of God to threaten Offenders, but that his Goodness will interpose in the End and hinder the Punishment, is to say, that God is not wise, for if he were he would certainly have taken care not to let those Men into the Secret. Bishop *Hort's* Sermons, p. 315,

have trifled with his Majesty, and mocked at his Threatnings all their Life, till at the Moment of Death he awakes like a Lion, and tears their Spirits with everlasting Anguish.

I might take notice also in this Place, that there is another mistaken Notion of God, into which some Persons have unhappily fallen, as *though God were the Cause and Author of Sin*, and have spoken unadvisedly with their Lips, in such Language as borders too near upon Blasphemy. But 'tis evident, that a God, who will punish the Sins of Men with such intense Pain and Torment, can never be so inconsistent with himself as to be the Author or Cause of those Sins. 'Tis granted, that his universal Providence has a Concern in every thing that is transacted among Men ; but since he has informed us in what a dreadful Manner he will execute his Vengeance against Sinners in the World to come, 'tis Insolence and Indignity against the blessed God to represent him as introducing Sin into our World. *Let God be true, tho' every Man be a Lyar* ; let God be pure, and righteous, and holy, tho' every Man be found guilty and criminal : *Otherwise, how shall God judge the World* ? How can he inflict such Torments on rebellious Creatures, if he constrain or influence them to practise this Rebellion ? All Opinions therefore, that allow of such an Inference, as *tho' God were the Author of Sin*, must be pronounced false and pernicious to Men, as well as injurious to the Justice of God ; for these Notions throw a vile Imputation on the blessed God, and charge him with heinous Insincerity, to forbid the Commission of Sin by all these Terrors, and yet suppose him to influence Men to the Practice of them.

Reflect. III. *How reasonable is it for us to believe, that such a Hell, as I have described, is prepar'd for impenitent Sinners, since there are so many Appearances of the Beginnings of it here on Earth, so many Indications, and Signs, and Fore-runners of such Misery and Torment inflicted on sinful Men : Survey the remarkable Executions of God's Judgments on the World in several Ages and Nations ; look back to our first Parents, who were thrust out of Paradise, the Garden of Pleasure, and banish'd from the Gates of it for ever, upon the Account of the first Sin, and the Entrance of it was guarded by a flaming Sword to forbid their Return. Behold the Flood of watry Vengeance in the Days of Noah breaking up from the vast Caverns of the Earth, and pouring*

ing down from the Windows of Heaven to punish Sin : *Deep calls unto Deep* in the tremendous Noise of these Water-spouts, which spread Death and Desolation over the Face of the whole Earth, *because all Flesh had sinned* against God their Creator. Turn your Eyes to *Sodom and Gomorrah*, and the Cities of the Plain, *suffering the Vengeance* of Heaven with Lightning and devouring Fire bursting from the Clouds to punish the unnatural Crimes of that Country. See the fiery flying Serpents, as the Messengers of divine Anger, to punish the Rebellion of the *Israelites* in the Wilderness: Mark what Multitudes in the Camp of *Israel* received their mortal Sting, and were given up to Destruction and Death. Cast your Eyes abroad over the Nations, and what Records have we of all former Ages, which do not manifest the Vengeance of God pursuing the Iniquities of Men, by Wars, and Famines, and Pestilences, and every thing that is bitter and dreadful to human Nature. See *Jerusalem*, the City of God, all in Flames, and the whole Land of *Judea* laid desolate with deepest Distress, diffus'd and reigning among all the Inhabitants of it : Above a Million of them were actually slaughter'd and consumed by Famine and Sword, as a Sacrifice to the Anger of God, for their long Provocations, and the cruel barbarous Murder of his Son *Jesus*. And when you have taken all these Surveys, then tell me if such Terrors of the Lord do not give us sufficient Warning what unknown Agonies and Destructions may be expected by obstinate and impenitent Sinners from the Hand of God, when the utmost Limits of his Patience restrain his Wrath no longer, but his Wisdom gives a loose to all his fiery Indignation.

To inforce this yet upon your Hearts, think again of all the Pains and Torments of Flesh, and Spirit, which arise from the Distempers of Body, and from the Anguish of Soul, even in this present State of Trial, this Land of Hope, this Season of Divine Long-suffering. Go to the Hospitals, where the Gout and Stone, and Rheumatism, and a thousand Maladies torture the Nerves and the Joints of Men with intolerable Smart ; and infer thence what God will inflict both on the Flesh and Spirit, or the Soul and Body of Sinners, in the Day of his compleat Vengeance, when his Offers of Mercy and the Years of his Grace are come to their last Period. Go and survey the Fields of Battle and Slaughter,
where

where thousands of the Dead and the dying are mingled in confused Heaps, and groan out their Souls in long Anguish and extreme Torture, with Bruises and Wounds, and all the smarting Effects of the Instruments of War. Now if all these Things come under the Conduct of Divine Providence in a sinful World, which is yet in a way of Hope, what may those resolved and obstinate Rebels expect, when all the Doors of Hope are shut up for ever, and Providence has nothing to do on Earth, or in Hell, but to execute the Vengeance of a God.

Shall we take one Step yet further, and think of the inward Pangs of Conscience, which some awaken'd Criminals have felt in this Life on the Account of Sin, when the Arrows of God have been shot into their Souls, and the Poison thereof lies drinking up their Spirits? Think what dreadful Ferments of Passion, and Rage, and Hatred of God have been found in the Hearts of some sinful Creatures, when they have grown mad with Revenge against God, and against themselves, and Envy against all their Fellow-Mortals, who are not in the same Circumstances; think yet again how terribly their Misery must be aggravated, when the Torture of everlasting Despair attends all the rest of the Pains and Sorrows they suffer; and then say, if the Description of a future Hell in the Word of God may not be true and real. What Anguish beyond all the Power of present Thought and Language, may seize all the Powers of wilful and impious Rebels against the Authority and the Mercy of God, when all the Stores of his Vengeance that have been treasuring up for many Years, shall be pour'd out upon them without any Mitigation or Mixture of Mercy.

Reflect. IV. *'Tis Matter of Surprise, and great Astonishment, that thousands and ten thousands of the sinful Children of Men, from Day to Day, and from Year to Year, are walking on the Borders of all this Misery, and yet are so thoughtless and unconcern'd about it. They carry peaceful and easy Minds in the midst of this dreadful Danger, and while they have all the Symptoms of the Children of Wrath upon them, they live without Fear, and make no Effort toward their Escape. Wretched Creatures indeed! who have a mortal Disease upon them that will breed this gnawing Worm of Conscience, that will grow up into all this Anguish and Distress, and yet are senseless of their own Peril, unacquainted with their*

their own State of Soul, and are daily treading their earthly Rounds of Business and of Pleasure with a merry Heart. All the heavy Artillery of Divine Vengeance is ready to be discharged upon them as soon as the Door of Death opens and lets them into the invisible World; and yet they walk on fearless and joyful, and have no Guard or Defence from all this Misery, besides their own vain Presumption. Stupid Creatures, to lie down at Night, and awake in the Morning within an Inch of Hell, and yet secure and fearless! They live *without God in the World*, and that even in this Land of Light and Hope, where he offers to visit them with all his Graces; and yet they are hasting hourly to the eternal World, where they must meet and behold him in all his Terrors.

Will nothing awaken you, O ye obstinate Transgressors against God, ye obstinate Rejecters of his Grace and Gospel? Will nothing warn you to flee from the Wrath to come? But just thus it was in the Days of *Noah*; the Sinners of that Generation would not hearken to that Preacher of Righteousness; and even when they saw the Clouds of Heaven grow big and black over their Heads, and the Rain began to be pour'd down from the Skies, little did they imagine that it would have drown'd the Earth, till they were overwhelm'd with the rising Destruction. And so shall it be in the Days of the Son of Man, when all the Warnings of the Preachers have been despised, and the threatened Vengeance of the Book of God derided, when they have set up for bold and witty Scoffers, and impudently demanded, *Where is the Promise of his Coming*? Then shall the great and terrible Day of the Lord come, and pour out upon them the full Measure of Wrath and Indignation.

Is it not time, my Friends, to bethink yourselves, whether this be your Case? Is it not time for every one of us to examine our Souls? Am I exposed to this Danger? Am I every Moment on the Brink of this Misery, and yet content to continue so one Night or one Day longer? Can I ever hope to escape the Fury of a God, while I thus abuse his Patience? Or can I have any Expectation of living with him as my God hereafter, if I never seek after him here? The Face of God, as a Stranger in the World to come, carries infinite Terrors in it, and yet we are content to be Strangers to him, and to live without his Acquaintance.

tance. *The Wrath of God abides upon every Man who is unregenerate in this Life, and who has not trusted in the Name of the Son of God, John iii. last ; yet they are thoughtless of it, for they feel it not ; but the Moment when they shall awake into the World of Spirits, that Wrath will be felt with sudden and dreadful Anguish, as a most unsupportable Burthen, and will crush all the Powers of the Soul into Torment.*

Reflect. V. *It deserves, and it demands our highest Gratitude to the Great God, our humblest Acknowledgments and our most exalted Praises to his Majesty and his Mercy, that we, who have long ago deserved this Misery, are not yet plunged into the midst of it : That we have not been entirely cut off from the Land of Hope, and sent down to this Destruction. Blessed be the Name and the Grace of our God for ever and ever.*

While there are Thousands who have been sent down to the Place of Punishment whence there is no Redemption, before they had continued so long in Sin as many of us have done, what a peculiar Instance is it of Divine Long-suffering and Goodness, that we are not actually put under the Sting of this living Worm, under this fiery Vengeance from the Hand of God ? What was there in us that should secure us from this Destruction, while we continued in our State of Guilt, Rebellion and Impenitence ? Have we not seen many Sinners on our right Hand, and on our left, cut off in their Sins, and to all appearance they seem to be sent down to the Place of Sorrows ? What is it but the special Mercy and distinguishing Favour of God that has dealt thus kindly with us, and spar'd and saved us, Week after Week, and Month after Month, while we continued in our Iniquities, and has given us Space for Repentance and Hope ? What shall we render to the Lord for all his Patience and Long-suffering, even to this Day ? How often have we incurred the Penalty of the Law of God, and the fiery Sentence of Condemnation by our repeated Iniquities, both against the Authority and the Grace of God ? And yet we are alive in his Presence, and are hearing the Words of Hope and Salvation. O let us look back and shudder at the Thoughts of that dreadful Precipice, on the Edge of which we have so long wander'd. Let us fly for Escape to the Refuge that is set before us, and give a thousand Glories

Glories to the Divine Mercy that we are not plunged into this Perdition.

Reflect. VI. Let us learn from this Description of Hell, and our imminent Danger of it, *the infinite Value and Worth of the Gospel of Christ*: This Gospel, which calls us aloud to fly from the Wrath to come, and points out to us the only effectual Way to escape it. What can all the Riches of the *Indies* do to relieve us under the Guilt and Distress into which Sin had brought us? What can the Favour of Princes, and the flattering Honours of the World do to rescue us from this Danger? What can the highest Gust of Sensuality, and the most exquisite Delights of Flesh and Blood do to secure us against this overwhelming Misery? It is only the Gospel of the Blessed *Jesus* is our Refuge, and our Safety from the tremendous Destruction.

What are the Heights, and Depths, and Lengths of human Science, with all the boasted Acquisitions of the brightest Genius of Mankind? Learning and Science can measure the Globe, can sound the Depths of the Sea, can compass the Heavens, can mete out the Distances of the Sun and Moon, and mark out the Path of every twinkling Star for many Ages past, or Ages to come; but they cannot acquaint us with the Way of Salvation from this long, this endless Distress. What are all the sublime Reasonings of Philosophers upon the abstruse and most difficult Subjects? What is the whole Circle of Sciences which human Wit and Thought can trace out and comprehend? Can they deliver us from the Guilt of one Sin? Can they free us from one of the Terrors of the Almighty? Can they assuage the Torment of a wounded Spirit, or guard us from the Impressions of Divine Indignation? Alas, they are all but Trifles, in comparison of this blessed Gospel, which saves us from eternal Anguish and Death.

'Tis the Gospel that teaches us the holy Skill to prevent this Worm of Conscience from gnawing the Soul, and instructs us how to kill it in the Seed and first Springs of it, to mortify the Corruptions of the Heart, to resist the Temptations of *Satan*, and where to wash away the Guilt of Sin. 'Tis this blessed Gospel that clearly discovers to us how we may guard against the Fire of Divine Wrath, or rather how to secure our Souls from becoming the Fuel of it. 'Tis this Book that teaches us to sprinkle the Blood of

Christ

Christ on a guilty Conscience by Faith, *i. e.* by receiving him as sincere Penitents, and thereby defends us from the Angel of Death and Destruction. This is that experimental Philosophy of the Saints in Heaven, whereby they have been released from the Bonds of their Sins, have been rescu'd from the Curse of the Law, and been secured from the gnawing Worm and the devouring Fire.

A serious Meditation of Hell in its exquisite Pain and Sorrow, will inance our Value of the Salvation of *Christ*, and will exalt our Esteem and Honour of the Love of God, who has deliver'd us from eternal Death. If we will but appoint our Thoughts to dwell a little on the Terrors and Vengeance from which the blessed *Jesus* has rescued us by his glorious Undertaking, if we will stretch the Powers of our Souls, and survey the Lengths, and the Breadths, and the Depths of this Distress and Misery which we have deserved, this will discover to us the Heights, and the Depths, and the Lengths of his Love, who submitted himself to the Curses of the Law of God, *and was made a Curse for us*, that he might redeem us to the Possession of an eternal Blessing, *Gal. iii. 23.* This will shew us what exceeding Riches of the Grace of God have been laid out upon us for our Salvation. This will spread before us the unmeasurable Love of *Jesus*, which has brought him down from the Bosom of his Father into such Agonies as he sustain'd in the Garden, and on the Cross, that he might rescue us from the Wrath to come. O what immense and endless Debts of Gratitude and Love are due from every ransom'd Sinner, who has been released from the Bonds of his Guilt, and from all this Wretchedness, by the Love of God the Father, and the Grace of his Son *Jesus Christ*, to whom be Glory and Honour, and most exalted Praise, for ever and ever. *Amen.*



DISCOURSE XIII.

The eternal Duration of the Punishments
in Hell.

Mark ix. 46.

Where their Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched.

SECTION I.

Arguments to prove the Perpetuity of Hell.

WHEN the Great and blessed God had a mind to make known his Wisdom, his Power, and his Goodness amongst Creatures, he built *this World* as a Theatre, in which those Perfections of his Nature might be display'd amidst the various Works of his Hands : He spread it round with the Blessings of Life and Pleasure, he overhung it with a Canopy of Skies and Stars, and placed the glorious Bodies of the Sun and Moon there to appear in their alternate Seasons ; and even amidst the Ruins which Sin has brought into this World, yet still every Eye may behold the Traces of an Almighty, an All-wise, and a Bountiful God.

When the same divine and sovereign Being design'd to exalt and diffuse the Wonders of his Grace among the best of his Creatures, he built a *Heaven* for them, and furnish'd it with unknown Varieties of Beauty and Blessing : And we would hope in our appointed Season to be rais'd to this upper World, and there to behold the Riches of divine Magnificence and Mercy, and to be Sharers thereof among the rest of the happy Inhabitants.

But since Sin and Wickedness has enter'd into his Creation of Men and Angels, he saw it necessary also to display the Terrors of his Justice, and to make his Wrath and Indignation known amongst rebellious Creatures, that he might maintain

maintain a just Awe and Reverence for his own Authority, and a constant Hatred of Sin through all his Dominions. For this Purpose, he has built a *Hell*, a dreadful Building indeed, in some dismal Region of his vast Empire, where he has amassed together all that is grievous and formidable to sensible Beings, and wicked Spirits carry their own inward Hell thither with them, a Hell of Sin and Misery; and tho' he has sent his own Son to acquaint us with the Distresses and Agonies of that doleful World, and to warn us of the Danger of falling into it; yet if any of us should be so unhappy as to continue in an obstinate State of Impenitence and Disobedience to God, we shall be made to confess, by dreadful Experience, that not one half hath been told us.

Therefore hath God set before us these Terrors in his Word, that we might fly from this Wrath to come, and avoid these Sufferings: And therefore do his Ministers, by his Commission, proceed to publish this Vengeance and Indignation of the Lord, that Sinners might be awaken'd to lay hold on the Hope that is set before them, and might be affrighted from plunging themselves into this Pit of Anguish, whence there is no Redemption.

We have taken a short Survey of these Miseries, in the *Kind and Nature of them*, in some former Discourses; and we are now come to the last Thing contain'd in our Saviour's Description of *Hell*, and that is the *Perpetuity* of it: The Misery is everlasting in both the Parts of it, for *the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched*. The Arguments which shall be employ'd to prove it are such as these.

I. *Argument*. The express Words of *Christ* and his Apostles Pronounce these Punishments *eternal*; and surely these Words are given to us to be the Foundation of our Faith and Practice, and the Rules of our Hope and Fear. My Text seems to carry plain and unanswerable Evidence in it. *The Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched*. And 'tis many times repeated in this Chapter, and that with a special Accent on the eternal Duration of it, to make that Circumstance of it more observed, and to aggravate the Terror. Such an awful Repetition from the Lips of the Son of God should make the Sound of the Vengeance dwell longer on the Ear, and the Threatening sink deeper into the Soul.

Let us next observe the final Sentence which *Christ*, as Judge, pronounces against impenitent Sinners among the Sons of Men, as well as against fallen Spirits, in *Matth. xxv.* 'Tis this, *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire prepar'd for the Devil and his Angels* : And as soon as the Sentence is pronounced, it is immediately executed, as our Saviour foretels, in the last Verse. *These shall go away into everlasting Punishment, and the Righteous into Life eternal.* What he pronounces as a Judge, he foretels also as a Prophet, that it shall be put in execution.

The express Word of God, in describing the Punishment of Sinners by the Pen of his two Apostles *Paul* and *John*, declares the same thing, *2 Thes. i. 9.* *They shall be punished with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord.* And the Book of the Revelation gives us Assurance, that these Miseries shall have no End, *Rev. xiv. 10, 11.* The *anti-christian* Idolaters, who worship the *Beast*, shall drink of the *Wine of the Wrath of God*, which is pour'd out, without Mixture, into the Cup of his Indignation, and shall be tormented with Fire and Brimstone in the Presence of the Lamb, and the Sinoak of their Torment ascendeth up for ever and ever. *Jude* the Apostle bears his Testimony in the same manner, ver. 6. the damned Spirits, who kept not their first Station, are said to be cast down into Hell, and bound in Chains of everlasting Darknes. Now suppose a Man plunged into a Pit of thick Darknes by the Command of God and bound there with everlasting Chains ? what Hope can he ever have of Deliverance ?

And if *Christ* and his Apostles, who were taught by him and by his blessed Spirit, assert this Punishment, shall be eternal, who shall dare to contradict them ? Who is there so rash and confident as to say, " This Torment shall not be everlasting, this Worm one Day shall die, and this Fire shall be quenched ? " Does it not approach to the Crime of contradicting the Almighty, and the true God ?

II. *Argument.* There is a sort of infinite Evil in Sin, arising from the Consideration of the Person against whom it is committed, i. e. the Great and Blessed God ; for every Crime, according to the Law of Nations, and the common Sense of Mankind, takes its Aggravation from the Dignity of the Person offended, as well as from the Heinousness of the Act ; so Reproaches or Assaults against a King, or a Father,

Father, are much more criminal and heinous than the same Assaults or Reproaches cast on an Equal or an Inferior ; but all Sin being an Offence against God, an infinite *Object*, and a Violation of his Law, is a Dishonour of infinite Majesty, an Affront to the divine Authority, and therefore its Aggravations arise in that proportion to a sort of Infinity, and require an equal Punishment. But because the Nature of a Creature cannot suffer infinite Punishment in the *Intenseness of the Pain*, therefore he must bear it to an *infinite Duration*, i. e. to all everlasting.

When divine Justice pronounces a Sentence against the Sinner equal to the Demerit of Sin, it must be infinite, i. e. eternal ; and the Sinner shall never *be released from the Prison* and the Punishment till he has paid the utmost Farthing, Matth. ix. 25. and till he has made Satisfaction to God equal to his Demands, and the Demerit of the Offence.

I know this Argument is treated with much Contempt and Derision among those of the Moderns who would diminish the Evil of Sin, and shorten the Punishment of it : But it is much easier to ridicule it than to answer it : A Jest is no Refutation. And after my best Survey of it, I think, without Prejudice or Partiality, the Force of it seems to me unanswerable as to the Desert of Sin ; and I am not ashamed to employ it in the Support of this Truth.

It is but a very feeble Opposition can be made to it by those who say, that *if Sin be counted an infinite Evil, and must have infinite Punishment, then all Sins are equal, and will require equal Punishment*, for there are no different Degrees in Infinity, or in things which are infinite.

But our Saviour has taught us, that there are certainly various Degrees of Punishment as well as of Sin : He assures us, that *it shall be more tolerable for the Inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the Day of Judgment, than it shall be for Capernaum and Bethsaida*, where he had preached and wrought his Wonders, Luk. x. 12, &c. and the Reason is plain, (*viz.*) because the Sins of Sodom were less than theirs.

And 'tis very easy to answer this Pretence or *Objection* about the Equality of all Sins, for Sins may have different Degrees of Guilt and Aggravation as to the *Act*, where the *Object* is the same, whether this Object be finite or infinite ; as the Murder of a Father or a King is a much greater Crime than a *Reproach* or *Slander* cast on the same Persons.

So the wilful Hatred of God and Blasphemy against him, with continued Malice and publick violent Opposition to his Name, or Law, or Gospel, are far greater Sins than a single Neglect of his daily Worship for fear of Persecution, or a distrusting his Providence, tho' both have the same infinite Being, *i. e.* God, for their Object; and in this Sense there is a sort of Infinity in each of the Crimes.

And accordingly *Punishments* may be proportioned to every Crime, for they may differ greatly in the Degree of Severity and Torture, tho' they may be all equal or eternal in the Duration. *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*, *Capernaum* and *Bethsaida*, may all suffer infinite or everlasting Sorrow, and yet the Degrees of their Pain may be exceeding different all the while. They may have the same Infinity of Duration, tho' very different as to the Intenseness or Degree of the Pain.

III. *Argument.* If the Iniquities committed in this Life were not punished with Torment which is everlasting, yet the Damned in Hell are ever sinning against God, and therefore they provoke the Vengeance of God to continue his punishing Hand upon them for ever. The Law of God in all its Demands of Duty, its Prohibitions of Sin, as well as in its Sanctions of Punishment, continues for ever in Force in Heaven, and Earth, and Hell, and we see not how it can be abrogated where it arises from the very Nature of God and a Creature: And *curst is he that continues not in all Things which the Law requires*, Gal. iii. Every new Sin demands a new Curse and a new Punishment, and there is no reason which forbids a righteous Governor to cease punishing, while the rebellious Creature will not cease to offend, and especially while he maintains an everlasting Enmity and Rebellion against the Law of God his Creator.

If there were any humble Meltings of Repentance in the guilty Soul, if there were any sincere Mournings in the sinful Creature for having offended his Maker, if there were any Softness of Heart relenting under a Sense of the Evil of Sin, and returning to Obedience and Duty, even this would not oblige a righteous and wise Governor to forgive the Criminal; Repentance is no Compensation for a wilful Offence; nor is it thought unrighteous or unwise for a Prince to punish even a penitent Offender with Death.

But let us propose the Case in utmost Favour to a Sinner against

against the blessed God, let us imagine that Divine Wisdom and Divine Mercy perhaps might be supposed to contrive and to offer some Proposals to Justice in a way of Compassion, and might enquire whether the Sentence of Punishment could not be reversed, or the Terror of it relieved, or some new State of Trial proposed. Let it be added in favour of the Criminal, that we do not find thro' all the Book of God the actual Practice of true Repentance beginning among Men, but it has been always follow'd with proportionable Degrees of Compassion from God : But, on the other side, when there is nothing found in the Heart of a Sinner but Obstinacy, and Malice, and Revenge, Cursing and Blasphemy against the Almighty, without the least moving or melting into a genuine Penitence or holy Sorrow, without any meek Submission to the Majesty and Justice of God, or humble imploring his Mercy, what reasonable Hope can such Wretches have, that their Chains of Darknes should be broken, and the Prisoners released from the Vengeance ? When they shall curse his Justice, because it punishes their Crimes, when they shall curse his Mercy, because it did not save their Souls, and curse and blaspheme the Blood of the Blessed *Jesus*, because it has not washed away their Sins, what possible Excuse can be made for such Creatures ? Or what possible Expectation can there be for such Criminals, but an everlasting Continuance of the fiery Indignation ?

Here it will be reply'd, but why should we suppose, and much more, why should we affirm, *the Damned will never repent* ? Are they not free in the other World from this Flesh and Blood, wherein there are so many unruly Passions and Appetites ? Are they not far remote from all the Temptations of Flesh and Sense, of Intemperance, Ambition, and Covetousness ? Have they not Understanding to see Divine Truths more clearly than in this World ? Have they not Reason to distinguish Good and Evil, and Free-will to chuse that which is Good ? Will they not hate all Sin, since they have been so long taught the Mischief of Sin by their Sufferings ? And is there any thing fitter than their Agonies and Torture by Fire, to make Men know and feel the dreadful Evil of sinning against God, and awaken them to Repentance ?

To this I answer, Let us judge a little concerning the Sinners in Hell, by the Practice of Sinners on Earth. How

many wretched Creatures are there who have been long imprison'd, and perhaps punished for Crimes against the State, and yet persist in their rebellious Temper, and are never convinced they were in the Wrong, so far as to change their Treason into sincere Submission, Repentance, and Obedience? Was not *Pharaoh*, King of *Egypt*, an Instance of the Stubbornness and Impenitence of human Nature, when in Opposition to ten dreadful Plagues he would still pursue the flying *Israelites*, and destroy a People beloved of God? Is not Hardness and Enmity against the Governour often increased by the severe Punishments that Criminals lie under? Have these Punishments any sufficient Power to soften their Hearts into true Repentance?

What tho' they do not live in the midst of sensual Temptations, yet who knows how far their Spirits, having been immersed in Flesh and Blood, may carry with them inward raging Appetites to those sinful Sensualities and defiling Pleasures, of which they are for ever deprived?

Let me ask again, Have the Devils ever repented in almost six thousand Years? Are they not the same Enemies to God, and his Glory, and his Image thro' all Ages? And tho' the damned Spirits of Men are absent from this World, and their evil Companions on Earth, yet are they not in the fittest Company to teach them Pride, and Rage, Resentment and Malice, and the most unfit to teach them Humility, Repentance, and Obedience to God? And when they have perversely sinned away all the Means of Grace in this Life, is it reasonable to imagine, that God will powerfully soften their Hearts by his Sovereign Grace, since he has never given the least Hint or Instance of it in all the Discoveries made in the Bible? And has it not been often one way of God's punishing Sinners here in this World, by letting them go on in their Iniquity and Madness to the End? And why may not the Wisdom and Justice of God see it fit to treat Sinners, who have been incorrigible in this Life, by the same Method in the World to come?

IV. *Argument.* The natural Effects and Consequences of Sin living in the Soul, are Misery and Torment so long as the Soul lives, *i. e.* for ever. Sin, tho' it be a moral Evil, as it is committed against God, yet it is such an Enemy to the Nature of Man, that where it has established its Habit and Temper in the Soul, it naturally prepares constant Anguish

guish of Conscience and certain Misery. A wicked Spirit all over averse to God and Goodness, gone from this World and all the soothing or busy Amusements of it, intense in its Desires of Happiness, and yet a Stranger to all that can make it truly happy, and at the same time shut out by God's righteous Judgment, from all the Means and Hopes of Grace, must needs be miserable, and has prepared a State of endless Misery for itself, because its Nature and Duration are immortal. An unholy Creature who loves not God, and cannot delight in Things holy and heavenly, but derives its chief Joy from sinful Pleasures, can never taste of Felicity, can never relish the Satisfactions that come from the Knowledge, and Love, and Enjoyment of God; and when it is torn away, and banished from all the sensible Amusements of this Life, it must and will be a wretched Creature in the World of Spirits, and that by the very Course of Nature: And God cannot be obliged to change the establish'd Course of Nature to relieve this Misery which the Sinner had wilfully brought on himself; nor can God make him happy without giving him a new Temper of Holiness, which he is not obliged to do by any Perfection of his Nature, or any Promise of Grace.

If the Souls of Men are immortal, such will their *Passions* be, their *Desires*, their *Fears*, and their *Sorrows*. Now their *natural Desires of Happiness*, as I have said, will be intense and strong, when God, the Spring of all Happiness, who hath been renounced and abandon'd by them, hath now for ever forsaken them, and separated himself from them. What can there remain for them but everlasting Darkness and Despair, without a Dawn of Hope thro' all the Ages of Eternity: Their guilty Consciences, with the Views of God's unchangeable Holiness, will for ever fill them with new *Fears* and Terrors, what shall be the next Punishment they are to suffer. Such is the State of Devils at this Time, who expect a more dreadful Punishment at the great Day, as several Places of Scripture make evident. Their being immersed in the Guilt of Sin, and under the constant and tyrannical Dominion of it, will overwhelm them with present Grief, with cutting Sorrows, and Horror unspeakable, which will sink into the Centre of their Souls, and make them an eternal Terror and Plague to themselves.

Again, let us consider their Immortality of Soul will be spent in *thinking* : And what comfortable or hopeful Object is there in Heaven, Earth, or Hell, on which they can fix or employ their Thoughts for one Moment, to give a short Release from their extream Misery ? So that they are left in endless Successions of most painful Thoughts and Passions from the very Nature of Things.

Again, suppose this Body of mine were by Nature immortal, and was design'd by my Creator in its Constitution to live for ever ; and suppose by my own Folly and Madness, my own wilful Indulgence of Appetite and Passion, I had brought some dreadful Distemper into my Flesh which was found to be incurable, whether it be the Gout or the Stone, or some more terrible Malady of the nervous Kind, must not this Gout, by Necessity of Nature, become an immortal Gout ? Must not these Distempers be immortal Distempers, and create eternal Pain ? And is the God of Nature bound to work a Miracle to cure and heal these Diseases which I have wilfully brought upon myself by my own Iniquities, and that after many Warnings ? Is it unrighteous in God to let me languish on amidst my Agonies and Groans as long as my Nature continues in being, *i. e.* to Immortality ? And especially when there are valuable Ends in Divine Providence, and God's Government of the World to be subserved, by suffering such wilful, rebellious, and impenitent Creatures to become Sacrifices to their own Iniquity and his Justice, and perpetual Monuments to other Worlds of their own Madness and his Holiness. Such is the Case of a sinful Spirit, and therefore a God of Justice may pronounce upon it, and execute the eternal Misery.

SECTION II.

The strongest and most plausible Objections against the Perpetuity of Hell answer'd.

I think these Reasons, which have been given, are sufficient to justify the Ministers of the Gospel in representing the Punishments of Hell as everlasting : But Man, sinful Man does not love to hear of this dreadful Perpetuity of Hell : They would fain find some Period to these Sorrows, they search on every side if there be no way for escape from this Prison, no Door of Mercy, no Cranny of Hope left among the Reasons of Things, or among the Attributes, or the Transactions of the blessed God : And they are ever proposing

posing some Methods to cut short this Eternity, which Scripture ascribes to the Punishment of impenitent Sinners. I shall endeavour therefore here to give a fair and plain Answer to the strongest Objections against this Doctrine which I ever yet have met with.

The *first* Objection is raised from a *Criticism on the Words of Scripture*. The Greek and Hebrew Words, say they, which we translate *Eternal* and *Everlasting*, where the Torments of Hell are mention'd, are not always used for proper and complete Eternity, they sometimes signify only a *long Duration*: So God gave *Abraham* and his Seed the Land of *Canaan* for an *everlasting Possession*, Gen. xvii. 8. but now the *Turks* possess it. Several of the Statutes of the *Levitical Law* were said to be *everlasting*, Lev. xvi. 34. But they are all abolished in the Gospel. The Sons of *Aaron* had an *everlasting Priesthood* conferr'd upon them, Exod. xl. 15. But this Office is cancell'd by the Kingdom of the *Messiah*, and finished for ever.

Besides, let it be remember'd, say the Objectors, that the Hebrew Word *Olam*, and the Greek *Aion* and *Aiones* signify only the various *Ages* or *Periods* of Time which belong to the Duration of Creatures, or to some Constitutions of God concerning his Creatures: And they should be translated an *Age*, or *Ages*, more properly than any thing else: And the Adjective *Aionios* when apply'd to Creatures, can relate only to *these Ages*; but these Expressions were never design'd to enter into God's own Eternity, either before the Existence of this World, or after the Consummation of it: Upon which Reason it is highly improper and absurd to assert, that the Duration or Punishment of Creatures in Hell shall be properly eternal and equal to the Duration of the blessed God himself. Now since every Thing in God's Transactions towards Creatures is sometimes limited by these *Aiones* or *Ages*, which are Periods of Time that shall be finished, why may not the Damnation and the Sorrows of Hell be also finished and cancell'd at a certain Length of Years, though the common Words, which we translate *Eternal* and *Everlasting*, be ascribed to them in Scripture?

Ans. 1. These are the same Words both in Greek and Hebrew, by which God expresses his own Eternity, which is absolute and complete without End. He is the *everlasting God*, Gen. xxi. 33. The eternal God, and his everlasting Arms, Deut.

Deut. xxxiii. 27. Rom. i. 20. and xvi. 26. and several other Places. These are the Words also by which the Scripture expresses the Duration of the *Felicities of Heaven*, and the eternal Life and Happiness of the Saints, Dan. xii. 2. Rom. vi. *last*, John iii. 15, &c. Now, why should we not suppose the same Words to signify the same Duration, when the Old or New Testament speaks of *everlasting Burnings* as the Vengeance of God against the Wicked, *Isai.* xxxiii. 14. or *everlasting Shame and Contempt*? Dan. xii. 2. And especially where the Joys of the Saints, and the Misery of Sinners, are set in Opposition to one another in the same Text, as in Dan. xii. and *Matth.* xxvi. 45. *The Wicked shall go away into everlasting Punishment, and the Righteous into Life eternal*? And yet further, when we find this Doctrine sufficiently confirmed by many other Places of Scripture which set forth the Eternity of these Torments? I grant, that the Eternity of God himself, before this World began, or after its Consummation, has something in it so immense and so incomprehensible, that in my most mature Thoughts I do not chuse to enter into those infinite Abysses; nor do I think we ought usually, when we speak concerning Creatures, to affirm positively, that their Existence shall be equal to that of the blessed God, especially with Regard to the Duration of their Punishment: perhaps this sort of Language may carry in it something beyond what we are called to discourse about, at least in this mortal State, and therefore such Comparisons are more safely omitted.

But I would remark here still, that these *Aiones* or Ages both of Reward and Punishment, which are pronounced concerning Saints or Sinners, do but begin in their Perfection at the End of this World; and thence it follows, that they must enter far into the Eternity of God's Existence yet to come: And the Saints will be made happy, and the Sinners will be punished for long Ages after the End of this World, and all the *Aiones* or Ages of it.

And though God, by his Spirit, has not been pleased to make this Comparison expressly, nor assert our Duration commensurate with his own, yet he is pleased to express the Duration of the Punishment of Sinners in the same common Language and Phrases, whereby he expresses his own Duration, and the Happiness of the Saints; and hereby he

he encourages us to express these Punishments by the same common Words in our Language too, rather than venture to cut them short by a *Greek* or *Hebrew* Criticism, without any divine Warrant or Necessity †.

Now are there any Sinners so void of Understanding, of so daring and desparate a Mind, as to venture their *eternal* All upon such a poor Criticism of Words? Even upon Supposition these Terms in the *Greek* and *Hebrew* might signify any long Duration short of Eternity; yet there is a terrible Hazard in confining them to this Sense, since they do denote a proper Eternity, when they describe the Duration of the blessed God; and I think we may add also, the Duration of the Happiness of the Saints.

Besides, let it be remembred, that the other Expressions of Scripture, which denote and pronounce the Perpetuity or Eternity of these Punishments, are not liable to the same Criticism or Ambiguity of a Word. *Their Fire shall be unquenchable or is not quenched, their Worm dieth not. They have no rest Day nor Night, they shall be tormented Day and Night for ever and ever*, Rev. xiv. and 20. These Expressions seem to carry with them a more certain Signification of the perpetual Continuance of the Punishment. Now can the Tempter and the Deceiver of Souls have so unhappy an Influence over you, as to persuade you to venture onward in the Paths of Sin, to put off Religion and delay your Repentance, and neglect the Means of Salvation, in hopes that hereafter this weak Criticism, upon some of the Threatnings, may take place before the Judge of the whole Earth, and thus excuse or save you? Is not such a sorry Refuge and Presumption a dangerous and a dismal Sign upon impenitent Sinners, that Sin and Satan have darken'd your Understanding, and confounded your Judgment, as well as harden'd your Hearts, in order to your everlasting Destruction.

† The Word *aidios*, *perpetual*, is also apply'd to the Chains of Devils, *Jud.* 6. as well as to God, *Rom.* i. and however the Word *aion* and *aiones* may be us'd for Ages or Periods in this World, yet *aiones ton aionon*, or *Ages of Ages*, is never apply'd in all the New Testament to any thing but God or Christ, or the Blessedness of Saints, or the Punishment of Sinners: and therefore we may well conclude, that all these four run into an Eternity beyond all the supposed Periods of this World, and far beyond all our Conceptions.

Answ. 2. Suppose the Punishments of Hell continue only for a long time, and not for an endless Immortality, yet this Time would certainly be found exceeding long for Sinners to bear the Torment even according to their own Criticisms. Let us consider this Matter under some Particulars. The *Jewish* Dispensation, which is sometimes called *everlasting*, stood near about fifteen hundred Years, from *Moses* to *Christ*; and are ye content to languish and groan under Torments and Miseries, for fifteen hundred Years, merely to satisfy your vicious Appetite of Pleasure for a few Days or a few Years of this mortal Life?

Again, The *rebellious Sinners*, who were destroyed at the Flood, and their Spirits, which were sent into the Prison of *Hades* or Hell, were certainly confin'd there four and twenty hundred Years: And if they were released then, as some imagine, by the Preaching of *Christ* to them, 'tis a long and dreadful Time to continue under the Vengeance of God; and is it worth while for any Man to continue in Sin on Earth, and to venture this Length of Punishment in Hell?

What I build this Computation upon, are some Expressions of *St. Peter*, 1 *Ep.* iii. 19, 20. where *Christ* is said to *preach unto the Spirits in Prison, which some time were disobedient, when once the Long-suffering of God waited in the Days of Noah*; some have supposed that this Text informs us of *Christ's* Descent into Hell after his Death, and then preaching to those Rebels who were drown'd in the Flood, near two thousand four hundred Years before, in order to awaken them to Repentance and Salvation: Whereas others think this Text may be better expounded concerning the Spirit of *Christ* given to *Noah*, which made him a Preacher of Righteousness, when he foretold and threaten'd a Flood of Waters, and called Men to Repentance.

But if it should be granted, that those rebellious Spirits among the Dead did all repent, and were deliver'd by this Preaching of *Christ*, would you chuse to indulge the Delights of Sin for a short Season, and venture twenty-four hundred Years of Torment and Anguish for it?

Yet further, the *Devils* have lain under Punishment near six thousand Years, (*viz.*) four thousand before *Christ* came, and almost two thousand Years since, which may be thus computed from what *St. Jude* says of them. The
Angels

Angels who kept not their first Station, they were cast into Chains of Darkneſs probably before the Creation of this our World, for they were fallen, and tempted *Adam* to ſin as ſoon as this World was made : And they had been confined in theſe Chains from that Time about four thouſand Years before *Chriſt* came, and are waiting ſtill for yet ſharper Punishment at the Judgment of the great Day. *Jude 6.* and 'tis evident that they are conſcious of this Terror and this future Increate of Punishment, for they expoſtulated with our Saviour, *Matth. viii. 29.* *Art thou come to torment us before the Time?* Now 'tis near two thouſand Years ſince *Chriſt* came, and from the Time of their Sinning, unto this Day, it is almoſt ſix thouſand Years : And when the great Day of Judgment comes, their fiercer Punishment is but then to begin : And are not the Devil and his Angels ſentenced and confined to dwell together with the wicked Children of *Adam*, when they ſhall be conſigned at that dreadful Day to the ſame *everlaſting Fire* and Torment which was prepared for thoſe evil Spirits ? And who knows when their Torment will end ? Now what Folly and Hardneſs of Heart, or rather what Madneſs is it for Men to continue in their Sins, to delay their Return to God, and abandon the Grace of the Goſpel under this fooliſh Flattery and wild Preſumption, that above ſix thouſand Years hence perhaps a certain Day may come when the *Worm* of Conſcience will die, and the *Fire* of Hell will be quenched ? Such Preſumption is Madneſs and Diſtraction rather than Reasoning.

The *ſecond Objection* is derived from the *Juſtice and Equity of God* : Surely may ſome Perſon ſay, The Juſtice of God will proportion the Punishment to the Offence ; but ſince our Sins are but the Actions of mortal and ſhort-liv'd Creatures, and are committed in a few Years of Time, why ſhould the Punishment be immortal, and the Anguiſh be lengthen'd out to Eternity ? Can a righteous God pronounce ſuch a ſevere and unjuſt Sentence, and execute it in its full Dimensions.

Anſw. It is not the Length of Time which wicked Men ſpent in committing their Sins, nor the Nature of the Perſons who have ſinned, that determines the Meaſure of Punishment, but the Dignity of that infinitely glorious Being, againſt whom Sin is committed, that gives ſuch a high Aggravation as to require Punishment without end. How many

many Instances are there amongst Men wherein Offenders against their Neighbours, or against a Magistrate, who spent but a few Moments in the Crime, yet are doomed to Imprisonment for Months and Years ? And a lower Degree of Trespafs against a King, which is short of High-Treason, is sometimes punished with Confiscation of Goods, and with Poverty and close Imprisonment for Life : And by the same Reason, the Sins of Men being committed against a God of infinite Majesty, require an endless Punishment, as I have proved in the second Argument : And therefore divine Justice pronounces or inflicts no longer Penalty than the Crimes of Men deserve, according to their Aggravations. If any Sinners tarry then till they have paid the utmost Farthing to divine Justice, I grant God will release them, but he has given us no Hope before.

The *third Objection* is drawn from the *Sovereignty and Goodness of God*. It is granted, say they, that the Threatnings of eternal Death are denounced against Sinners in Scripture, yet it is not necessary God should execute them to the full. When a *Law* is made, the *Threatnings* of it only declare what Punishment the Offender shall be exposed to, and shall be obliged to bear when it is inflicted ; but these Expressions in a Law do not oblige the Government to inflict that Sentence with all its Terrors. It is granted, that in the Case of *Promises*, Truth and Veracity oblige the Promiser to fulfil them punctually, because the Right of the Thing promised passes over to that other Person to whom the Promise was made, and he hath such a Right to require it, that it is Injustice to withhold it from him ; and therefore everlasting Felicity must be given to the Righteous : But in *Threatnings* the Case is otherwise ; for tho' the full Punishment is due to Sinners, yet they will never require the Execution of it ; and the Goodness of God will incline him to relieve the Sufferer, and to release him from the Severity of such a Punishment, where his Veracity or Truth does not forbid it.

To this I answer two ways :

1st, I will not debate this Point of Law now, how far a Governor of sovereign and absolute Authority can dispense with his own Threatnings, can omit the Execution of them, relax the Degree of threatned Punishment, or shorten the Duration of it : But let it be consider'd, that here is not
only

only the *Threatning* of a God, the universal Governor, but the *Prediction* of this eternal Punishment, by a *God who cannot lye*. God's own Truth and Veracity are concerned in this Case, since his Son *Jesus*, who is the greatest of his Messengers, together with the Prophets and Apostles, have in the Name of God often foretold, that these Punishments shall be eternal : And therefore whatsoever an absolute Governor might do, as to shortening the Punishment *threatned*, in a way of Mercy and Relaxation ; yet I cannot see how the Truth and Veracity of God himself, or the Veracity of his Son *Jesus Christ*, who is the great Prophet, or the Truth of the rest of his Prophets and Messengers can be maintain'd, if this Punishment be not executed according to the many exprefs *Predictions* of it. These all agree to tell us, by Inspiration from Heaven, in various Forms of Speech, that the Torments of Hell shall be everlasting ; and (as I hinted before) the Man *Jesus*, who pronounces this eternal Sentence as a *Lord* and a *Judge*, foretels it also as a *Prophet*, that the Execution of it shall be to all everlasting.

Answ. 2. Obstinate and impenitent Sinners have no Reason to expect, that the Goodness of God should release them from their Miseries, since the Justice and the Holiness, the righteous Government and Authority of God in his Law require and demand their Due of Honour, as well as his Goodness. Do we not see these Honours of divine Justice, and of God's Hatred of Sin, have been continually demanded and executed in the infinite and innumerable Evils, Sorrows, Miseries, Diseases and Deaths, that have been spread over this World almost six thousand Years because of Sin ? Nor does his Goodness forbid or hinder it.

And let it be remember'd too, that all this immense Variety and long Succession of Plagues and Terrors arose originally from the just Indignation and Resentment of God against one Sin, even that of the first Man. Who was it that burnt *Sodom* and *Gomerrah* with Fire from Heaven ? Who was it that chain'd fallen Angels in Darknes to a more terrible Judgment ? Was it not a God of supreme Goodness ? Who sent Famines, and Pestilences, and Slaughters all over the Earth in many distinct Generations, whereby Mankind have been made abundantly wretched and plunged into Millions of Distresses ? And yet the Goodness of God abides for ever. And while the Great God is acting
according

according to the Glories of his Nature and Government in punishing rebellious Creatures, his Goodness will feel no soft and sensible Impressions from all their Groans and Outcries ; but if I may so express it, will be changed into just Indignation without end. And the Language of it to those impenitent Wretches will be this, *Because I have called and ye refused, ye have set at nought all my Counsel and would none of my Reproof, I will laugh at your Calamity, I will mock when your Fear cometh ; when your Fear cometh as Desolation, and your Destruction as a Whirlwind, when Distress and Anguish cometh upon you, then shall ye call upon me but I will not answer ; ye shall seek me early, but ye shall not find me ; for ye hated Knowledge, and did not chuse the Fear of the Lord : Ye would none of my Counsels, ye despised all my Rebukes ; therefore shall ye eat of the Fruit of your own Way, and be filled with your own Devices.* Take them, Angels, bind them Hand and Foot, and cast them into everlasting Fire and utter Darkeness ; there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth, Prov. i. Matth. xxii. 13.

Let us cease then to murmur against the Threatnings and the Transactions of the Great God, till we are become fitter Judges of his Perfections and their Demands. Let us cavil no more against his Conduct and Government, till we can teach him how far his punishing Justice shall go in the Execution of his Threatnings, and till we can assign to him the Point and Limit where his Goodness shall interpose and restrain that Justice.

The fourth Objection is derived from the Rectitude of the Nature of God, or his common Equity and Mercy united, which has been represented in this Manner. Suppose one of the damned Spirits among Mankind should address himself to the Great God in such sort of Language as this, “ Lord, I “ was created by thy sovereign Pleasure without my own “ Will, I did not desire to be made, much less to be born “ in such a Relation to Adam, whereby I brought a sinful “ Nature into the World with me : But I was united by “ thy Power and Pleasure to a Body which had the Seeds “ of Sin and Misery in it : There were strong Appetites “ and violent Passions mingled with my Flesh and Blood, “ which I myself had no Hand in procuring ; they fermented in me with much Vehemence, and I was tempted “ to many Excesses : I made some Resistance at first, and “ many

“ many times try’d to subdue them, but I was overcome :
 “ At last I suffer’d myself to be carried away by the Stream
 “ of these sinful Affections and Appetites, which I could
 “ not possibly avoid, nor easily subdue. Is it agreeable to
 “ thine Equity, O Blessed God, to punish such a poor
 “ Wretch with everlasting Torments ? And can thy Mercy
 “ continue to see this my Misery for ever and ever, and not
 “ help me ? I entreat thee, O thou Almighty Author of
 “ my Being, to destroy and annihilate me utterly Soul and
 “ Body ; take away this Being which I never asked nor de-
 “ sired ; nay, which I would not have consented to accept
 “ among the sinful Race of Mankind, because in this Track
 “ of Generation and Existence I stood much more likely to
 “ be miserable than to be happy.

Ans. 1st, As for the Reasonableness and Equity of the
 Conveyance and Communication of the original Effects of
 the Sin of *Adam* thro’ every Generation of Man, ’tis granted,
 there are some Difficulties attending it ; but these are ge-
 nerally answer’d by the Writers on that Subject ; and for
 me to divert from my present Discourse, in order to debate
 this Point here, would be too tedious.

The Equity of this wise and awful Constitution of God
 has been lately vindicated in a large Treatise on the *Ruin
 and Recovery of Mankind*, especially in the second Edition
 of that Book. But ’tis enough for my present Argument
 to say, that God himself will make the Equity of this Con-
 stitution to appear with much more Evidence and Con-
 viction in the last great Day, when Millions of actual Cri-
 minals shall stand before the Judgment-Seat, who owe the
 first Spring of their Sin and Ruin to our common Parent,
 and yet will fall under the righteous Condemnation of the
 Judge.

Ans. 2. When God decreed to give thee a Being, O
 Sinner, and design’d thee in his eternal Ideas to be a Man,
 placed among a thousand Blessings of Nature and Provi-
 dence, it was then a Favour of thy Creator ; for thou wert
 design’d also in this original divine Idea to have full Suffici-
 ency of Power to become wise and happy. It was also a
 Favour from thy Creator, that he took all these thy Suffi-
 ciencies of Power, and put them into the Hand of one Man,
 even the Father of thy Race, because he was as wise, and
 holy, and as well able as any Man of his Posterity could be,

to preserve his Station in the Favour of God, and to secure thy Happiness together with his own ; and he had much stronger Obligations to obey his Maker, and more powerful Motives to secure thy Happiness than thou thyself, or any single Man could possibly have, because he was intrusted with the Felicity of so many Millions of his own dear Offspring as well as his own. Now though *Adam*, thy first Father, being thus furnished with Sufficiencies of Power, and with the strongest Obligations to preserve himself and thee, has actually sinned and ruin'd himself and his Offspring ; (this is indeed an unhappy Truth ;) but the Great God is not to blame, who has not only acted wisely but kindly towards his Creatures in this Constitution, because, so far as we can judge, it was much more probable that *Adam* would have maintain'd his Innocence and his Happiness, together with that of his Offspring.

Again, when the Race of Man was ruin'd, and God saw that every Man would come into the World under unhappy Circumstances of Guilt and Corruption of Nature, he provided a Covenant of Grace, and brought thee into some Knowledge of it : And this had been effectual to have recover'd and saved thee from the Ruins of the Fall if thou hadst exerted all thy Force, employ'd all thy natural Powers of Understanding and Will for this Purpose, and used all thy Diligence to follow the Methods of his Grace, and hadst sought earnestly for divine Aids : For there is no Man among the Damned is able to say, *I have done every thing that was in my Power to do* : No Man shall be condemn'd for what was utterly impossible for him to avoid : It is confess'd indeed thou art laid under some Hardships and Difficulties by the Sin of thy first Father ; yet it is thine own actual and personal Crimes for which thou art here condemn'd at this Judgment, wherein *every one shall be judged and rewarded according to his Works* : 'Tis for many wilful Offences against the Law of God, and for sinning against the Offers of divine Grace ; 'tis for Obstinacy against thy own Conscience, and all the outward and inward Monitions of thy Duty, that thou art fallen under the Sentence, and because thou didst not labour and strive against Sin, and resist it even to the End of thy State of Life and Trial. Thou hast had many an inward Reproof for Sin, many a secret or publick Call to Virtue, and perhaps loud and fair

Warnings

Warnings of thy Danger ; but thou hast turn'd a deaf Ear to them all, and it is thy own Folly, Obstinacy, and Iniquity, that have brought thee into this Misery, and thou must eat the Fruit of thy own Works.

If there should be any Person found indeed among *Jews*, *Gentiles* or *Christians*, who can justly complain, *I have not had a fair and full State of Trial, and yet I am condemned*, I think we may grant that the righteous God will release such from their Misery, after they have worn out a proper Number of Years in Punishment proportionable to their past Crimes ; and that there shall be a fair, and full, and proper State of Trial appointed to them before they shall be utterly and unretrievably miserable ; But if no such Person be found there, if there be no such just Complaint to be made among the Millions of the Damned, then they may be still continued in their Prison and Punishment without any Imputation upon divine Justice and Equity.

Ans. 3. Whensoever any such Criminal in Hell shall be found making such a sincere and mournful Address to the righteous and merciful Judge of all, if at the same time he is truly humble and penitent for his past Sins, and is grieved at his Heart for having offended his Maker, and melts into sincere Repentance, I cannot think that a God of perfect Equity and rich Mercy will continue such a Creature under his Vengeance ; but rather, that the Perfections of God will contrive a way for escape, though God has not given us here any Revelation or Discovery of such special Grace as this.

But, on the other hand, whatever melting and moving Speeches may be made by Sinners here on Earth, in Compassion to the Sinners who are gone before them to Hell ; yet if no such Person be ever found in Hell, truly and humbly repenting of his Sins, nor have we any reason to think there ever will, why should a righteous God be obliged to cease punishing a Rebel who only is vexed and raging under his own Chains, and who continues in the Spirit of Obstinacy and Rebellion against God, and will not repent of it ?

Objection the fifth is derived from the *Mercy and Compassion of a God, compar'd with the Mercy and Compassion of Man*. Surely the Compassion of the ever-blessed God, who has described himself rich in Mercy, abundant in Goodness,

and whose very Name is *Love*, 1 *John* iv. 8. must have transcendent Tenderness and Pity towards his Creatures, the Work of his Hands, above all the Compassions that any one Fellow-Creature can express towards another. Now the very Thought and Name of eternal Punishments, or endless Torment, is such as seems to shock the Nature of a good-natur'd Man; and tho' he was never so much injured, yet he would never have a Thought of wishing his Enemy any kind of eternal Punishment for it, much less of condemning him to everlasting Misery, and supporting him in Being on purpose to suffer it; and therefore we cannot suppose that God will do it.

The *Objection* is further strengthen'd by an Expression of our Saviour himself, who says, *Mark* xviii. 19. *There is none good, save one, that is God*: As much as to say, There is none equal or comparable in Goodness to God himself: And 'tis further supported still by the common Notions which good Men have of God; those Expressions in the apocryphal Writings confirm it, 4 *Esd.* v. 33. *Then said the Lord unto me, Thou art sore troubled in Mind for Israel: Lovest thou that People more than he that made them?* And in the same Book, Chap. viii. 47. *Thou comest far short, that thou shouldst be able to love my Creature more than I.* Now, since no good Man could wish such a Curse or Mischief to his worst and most wicked Enemy, as Torment without End, surely we cannot conceive the Great God will ever be so severe as to inflict it.

Answer 1st, 'Tis readily allowed, that God has more Goodness than any Creature, but God has also more Wisdom and Knowledge, which concur with his Goodness in all his Actions, and he forms a much juster Judgment concerning the Evil and Demerits of Sin and Rebellion against himself, than it is possible for any Creature to form: And I think I may boldly assert, none can know the complete Evil of Sin, or its full Desert, but that same glorious Being against whom Sin is committed, who knows well the Dignity of his own Nature and his own Law, and what unspeakable Injury is done thereto by the Sins of Men. Now his Goodness in all his Transactions must be regulated and limited by this infinite Wisdom; and if a Man does not see and consent to the just Demerits of Sin against his Maker, 'tis because he has less Wisdom and Knowledge than the
Great

Great God has, and his Tendernefs and Compassion may run into very great Excesses, and may be in some Instances a Sign of his Weakness and Folly, as well as of his Goodness and Pity, as I shall shew under the next Answer.

At present let us represent the Case in a common Instance. When Criminals go to Execution from Month to Month, or from Year to Year, in this great City; and especially if some of them have a handsome and agreeable Appearance, and if they are wringing their Hands with Outcries, and vexing their own Hearts, and are stung by their own Consciences for their having brought this Misery upon themselves, you will find several of the Spectators of so tender a Make as to grieve for the Execution of such Criminals, and to wish in their Hearts it was in their Power to save them. And yet further, if there are Numbers of these wicked Creatures that are sent at once to the Punishment of the Sword or the Gallows, there may be many of these Spectators grieving for them, and pitying them, and perhaps exclaiming against the Severity of the Law, and the Cruelty of the Judge, for condemning such Malefactors to death.

But do all these Weepers and Complainants judge justly of the Case? Do they consider how pernicious and ruinous a thing it would be to a Government to let such Traitors go unpunished? Do they know, that 'tis a piece of Clemency and Goodness to the Innocent to punish the Wicked? Or that it is a piece of necessary Honour due to the Laws, to make those who insolently break them sustain the Penalty that the Law has appointed? Do they remember that the few good Qualities, or supposed Talents, or fine Appearances which these Offenders are possessed of, should out-weigh the Demands of the Law and Justice, the Peace of the Nation or Kingdom, and the Restraint of others from the same Crimes?

Answ. 2. The Goodness of God, the eternal Spirit, is a much superior thing to the Tendernefs and Compassion of Man dwelling in Flesh and Blood. Man grows compassionate by a sort of Sympathy or Sensation of the Miseries which his Fellow-Creatures endure; and though this is exceeding useful for many Purposes of human Life, and therefore God planted it in our Natures; yet it has so much Mixture of animal Nature with it, that it frequently degenerates into

Weakness, Fondness, and Folly. And indeed, if every tender Creature must be gratify'd in this Weakness, and form the Rules of Government, there would never a Malefactor fall under Execution, but the vilest Criminals would be spared, tho' the Government were ruin'd.

On the other hand, the *Goodness* or *Mercy* of God is a sedate Willingness or Design to do good to Creatures, and particularly to the Miserable, but always according to the Directions of Wisdom and Holiness. As God cannot have such Anger, Resentment, or Cruelty in his Nature, as Mankind may fall into when they are punishing Offenders, so properly speaking, he has no such sort of passionate Tenderness and Sympathy in sparing them : Though the Words of greatest Affection are sometimes used by the sacred Writers to figure out the Mercies of God to Man ; yet God both punishes and spares according to the calm and righteous Exercises of his Wisdom, and not under the Influence of such Passions as we feel.

Since therefore the Exercise of such sort of Passions amongst Men oftentimes appears to be the Weakness of Nature joined with the Ignorance of the Rules of Equity, is it reasonable that the Great and All-wise God should make such Creatures his Patterns in the Limitation of the Exercises of his Justice ? Or that he should be as weak as they are, and as much moved to swerve from the Rules of his own righteous Government by such a sort of Tenderness as ignorant, weak and foolish Man may sometimes express towards Criminals in their deserved Misery ?

It is readily granted, that a wise and a good Man may and ought to be sorry and grieved, that any of his Fellow-Creatures should be so vicious as to bring themselves under so severe a Penalty by their own wilful Crimes ; but still in their calmest and wisest Thoughts they acknowledge the Wisdom and Equity of the Government, in inflicting such Penalties upon those who heinously offend, and they acquiesce in the Sentence and the Execution.

Our blessed Lord *Jesus* himself, who was the wisest and the best of Creatures, look'd upon the City of *Jerusalem* with an Eye of Compassion, and wept over it, Luk. xiii. 34. O *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gather'd thy Children as a Hen doth gather her Brood under her Wings,*

Wings, and ye would not ? therefore behold your House is left unto you desolate. Let it be observed here, that our Saviour had the Bowels, and Compassions, and Tenderness of the best of Men ; but he still maintains the vindictive Exercise of the Government of God. “ Your Desolation must and “ shall come upon you, nor will I forbid or withhold it.” And I am sure the human Nature of our blessed Saviour was formed nearest to the Image of God beyond any Creature besides ; and as I have hinted before, it is he who is the supreme Messenger of his Father’s Love, that has pronounced these eternal Punishments upon impenitent Sinners in many Parts of his Ministry.

Ans. 3. How far will these *Objectors* permit the *Justice* of God to go in the Punishment of impenitent Sinners ? If eternal Punishment must neither be threatned nor inflicted, lest divine *Goodness* be injured, then all Mankind even the worst and vilest of Criminals, must certainly be one Day delivered from their Miseries ; and thus the Great God, who is infinitely offended, is bound to finish his Wrath one Day, and return in Mercy to the Offenders, whether they return to him by Repentance or no. What ! May the criminal rebel Creature with Impudence and Spite affront the Creator infinitely, and must not the Creator have a Right to demand equal Vengeance ? No, he must not, according to these Writers : For if the essential Goodness of God do certainly forbid eternal Punishments, these Absurdities, as gross as they appear, will be the necessary Consequents of it : And tho’ the Creature be not restrain’d from sinning, yet the Blessed God will be utterly restrain’d from punishing : And is this a Doctrine fit to be believed by Christians, or to be taught by those who have no Commission for it from their Bible ? Or indeed, will the Light of Nature and Reason ever justify and support this sort of Pleading ?

Objection the sixth is drawn from the *Wisdom of God in his Government of the World.* Surely, will the Sinner say, it was for some valuable End that God at first pronounced Punishment to attend the Sins of his Creatures, for *he does not afflict willingly, nor delight to grieve the Children of Men :* His Design must be therefore one of these two things ; either to *correct and reform* the Sinners whom he punishes, and reduce them to their Duty, in order to partake of his Mercy, or else it must be to *maintain a publick Monument and*

Demonstration of his Justice, and to support the Authority of his Law, and Honour of his Government that he might deter other Creatures from sinning against him : But when this World is come to its Period, and his governing Providence over it is finished, and all the Means of Grace are ended, the first End, (*viz.*) *Correction and Reformation* ceases : There is no more hope of reforming such Sinners as these. And what further need can there be of the secondary Design of Punishment, (*viz.*) the *Demonstration of his Justice* in so terrible a manner to *restrain others from sinning*, when the State of our Trial is ended, and all Mankind are sent either to Heaven or Hell ?

Ans. 1. I might here reply, by way of *Concession*, that if there were no other intelligent Creatures to be Witnesses of these eternal Demonstrations of God's Holiness, his Justice and his Hatred of Sin : and if God himself was the only Being who knew of these eternal Punishments, I acknowledge I cannot see sufficient Reason for this endless Duration of them : I cannot give any probable Account why Creatures, who are never to be corrected and reformed, should be tormented for ever in secret ; God perfectly knows his own Holiness and Justice without such Monuments of it ; and since he has asserted this Punishment, I think there must be some Creatures to receive a moral Influence from the Knowledge of it.

I answer 2dly, When there is a Representation made of the Punishment of the Worshipers of the Beast in *Rev. xiv. 10, 11.* that *they shall drink of the Wine of the Wrath of God which is poured out without Mixture, and they shall be tormented with Fire and Brimstone, and the Smoke of their Torment ascendeth for ever and ever*, it is in the Presence of the holy Angels as well as in the Presence of the Lamb. Angels and other innocent Beings may improve such a Sight to valuable Purposes.

Objection the seventh, When we remember that *Jesus Christ* himself hath assured us that *but few shall be saved*, and that the broad Way is full of Sinners running down to Destruction and Death ; if we suppose these Punishments to be endless, some will be ready to say, What ! shall the greatest part of God's Creatures be made miserable for ever and ever ? Is this consistent with the Wisdom and Goodness of the Blessed God, to form such an immense Multitude of
Souls

Souls dwelling in Bodies, to make them for ever miserable ? What will a God of Goodness have to prove his Goodness to his Creatures, if far the greatest Part of them are left in everlasting Sorrows ?

Ans. The far greatest Part of the Creation of God may be holy and happy still : For this World of ours, even all Mankind, is a very small Portion of God's immense Dominions ; and when the Transactions of our Earth, and God's present Government of it shall be finished, he has a thousand other Dominions among the Planets and Stars, which has been proved by the Reason of Men to a great Degree of Probability ; and these he governs by righteous Laws ; and tho' he has not revealed much of them to us in this Life, yet he has discover'd something of this kind in his own Word : He has acquainted us with his wise and righteous Government over *fallen Angels*, and what was their Sin, (*viz.*) their Pride and Ambition, and what was their Punishment for their first Rebellion, *Jud.* 6. and this is done by the Wisdom and Mercy of God to affright *Men* from sinning, while we behold how those fallen Spirits are exposed and set forth as terrible Examples for our Warning. And why may not the everlasting Punishment of Sinners among the Children of *Men* be made a standing Monument of God's Justice, to deter many other *Worlds* from offending him ? Other Worlds, I say, of unknown Creatures, which perhaps may inhabit the planetary Globes rolling round the same Sun as our Earth does ? and their State of Trial perhaps is not yet begun, or it may be half run out, and yet shall not be finish'd for some thousands of Years ?

Or perhaps there are other Worlds of Spirits, and invisible, incorporeal, intelligent Creatures in a State of Trial, may persevere in glorious Innocence and complete Happiness, to the eternal Praise of their Maker's Goodness, and may yet be kept in their constant Duty and Obedience, by having always in their View the eternal Punishments of wicked *Men*. See this Subject treated of more at large in a Book called, *The Strength and Weakness of human Reason*, second Edition, pag. 288.

The counsels of God are far above our Reach, and his Dominions and Governments are unknown to us. What if the Great God will have Creatures in some of his Territories,

tories, who in themselves are weak and ready to fall, and may be deterr'd from Sin and Apostacy by such standing Manifestations of his Hatred of it, and his righteous Vengeance against it ? And since others have been Monuments of Warning to us, what if he please to make this wicked World of ours, when he has taken the few Righteous out of it to Heaven ; I say, what if he please to make the rest an everlasting Spectacle of his Justice and Holiness to a hundred or a thousand other Worlds, which may be utterly unknown to us ? And he may, for this end, reveal his Transactions with Mankind to those World, tho' he has not revealed much of their Affairs to us.

If I were to mention any other *Objection* worthy of Notice, I know of none but this, viz. *some learned Men suppose it to have been the Opinion of the primitive Fathers*, that Souls departing from this World were sent into *Hades*, or the State the Dead, where the Righteous rested in a State of Peace and Hope till the Resurrection should bring them to Heaven : And the most wicked amongst Mankind went also to *Hades*, or this State of the Dead, under a long and fearful Expectation of the final Punishments of Hell : But that great Multitudes who were of an indifferent Character, and who were not so bad but they might be reclaimed, had another State of Trial in *Hades*, whither, they say our Lord *Jesus Christ* at his Death descended and preached the Gospel to them, and many of them were recovered, and shall be hereafter raised to eternal Life. The chief Scripture whence they borrow this is 1 *Pet.* iii. 19, 20. of which we have spoken before ; and that at the great Day of Judgment the incorrigible Sinners should be sent with the Devils into the Punishment of Fire, which, though it may last for a shorter or longer time, yet should destroy both their Bodies and their Souls for ever.

To this I answer first, If this had been the Doctrine of many ancient *Christians*, yet unless they could bring plainer Proofs of it from the Word of God than one difficult and obscure Text of St. *Peter*, there is no great reason for us to receive from them such Traditions. The Word of God is our only Test of Truth, and our Instructor in Matters of the invisible World.

Ans. 2dly, Though there might be a few of the early Writers who seem'd to incline to some of these Opinions ; yet

yet this Sense is drawn out from most of them by learned Men with much Difficulty, Uncertainty and Conjecture : And there are many others of them who make the Punishments of Hell as durable as the Writers of later Ages : Nor do they mention or allow of any such sort of *Purgatory* for Souls of an indifferent Character as this Objection pretends. Those who will look into their Writings will find abundant Evidence, that most of them talk of *eternal Punishment by Fire* in the very Words and Language of the New Testament, and in direct Opposition to this Doctrine of temporal Punishments in Hell. I shall cite but two Writers, one of which is the very earliest of the Fathers, an Acquaintance of St. Paul, and that is *Clemens the Roman*, who in the eighth Section of his second Epistle says thus ;

Let us therefore repent whilst we are yet upon the Earth : For we are as Clay in the Hand of the Artificer. For as the Potter, if he make a Vessel, and it be distorted in his Hands, or broken, again forms it a-new ; but if he hath gone so far as to throw it into the Furnace of Fire, he can no more bring any Remedy to it : So we, whilst we are in this World, should repent with our whole Heart for whatsoever Evil we have done in the Flesh, while we have yet the Time of Repentance, that we may be saved by the Lord. For after we shall have departed out of this World, we shall no longer be able either to confess our Sins, or repent in the other. The English Reader may find this in Archbishop Wakes's Translation of the most primitive Fathers.

Justin Martyr, who is also one of the most early Writers, in the eighth Section of his *first Apology*, tells us, that *Plato teaches that Rhadamanthus and Minos punished the Unrighteous who came before them ; and that we Christians say the same thing will be done, but 'tis by Christ ; when their Bodies are joined with their Souls, and they shall be punished with eternal Punishment, and not for the Period of a thousand Years only, as Plato said.* This same Writer also, in very many Places of his Works, talks of *eternal Punishment*, and of *Punishment for an endless Age*, and *eternal Fire*, with *eternal Sensation or Pain*.

Irenæus also after him, as well as *Ignatius* and *Polycarp* before him, speak of this *Fire which is not to be quenched*, and of *Death and Punishment, not temporal, but eternal.* So that
it

it is really an Imposition upon unlearned Readers to pretend, that the Doctrine which denies the Eternity of the Punishments of Hell, was the common Sense of the primitive Fathers, tho' it is granted that *Origen* and some others might be of this Opinion.

To conclude ; Since the Word of God has expressly assured us, that these Punishments of sinful Men shall be eternal, it is not for us to hearken to any other Doctrines, and neglect what God has said, nor is it fit for us to dispute the Wisdom and Justice of divine Conduct, nor to impeach his Goodness. *Let God be true, though every Man be a Liar ; let God be wise tho' every Man be a Fool ; let God be just and righteous in all his Ways, though Man vainly murmur against him, and raise these noisy and feeble Remonstrances against his Judgments. The Counsel of the Lord shall stand, and he will do all his Pleasure in the eternal Manifestations of his Justice as well as his Grace.* If there be any supposed Inconsistency or Cloud of Difficulty remaining on his Conduct, he will clear it up to the Satisfaction of every rational Mind one Day, and will bring the Conscience of every condemned Sinner to acknowledge the Equity of his Proceedings : The whole Creation shall then justify the final Sentence of Judgment on all the Sons of Men.

I cannot finish this awful Argument better than the Apostle finishes the same sort of Subject in the ninth and eleventh Chapters to the *Romans*. *O Man, who art thou that repliest against God ? What if God, willing to shew his Wrath, and to make his Power known, hath endured with much Long-suffering the Vessels of Wrath who have fitted themselves for Destruction ? And that he might make known the Riches of his Glory on the Vessels of Mercy, which he hath afore prepared unto Glory ? O the Depths of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge, the Justice and the Goodness of God, how unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out ? For of him, and thro' him, and to him, are all things, to whom be Glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

SECTION III.

Reflections on the Eternity of Punishment in Hell.

As we have before drawn various *Inferences* from the Nature of those Punishments that are prepar'd for Sinners in the World to come, so there are other *Inferences* and terrible

ble *Reflections* which may be derived from the *Duration* or *Perpetuity* of the Torments of Hell.

Reflect. I. *What unspeakable Anguish and Torture doth this one Circumstance add to every Pain and Sorrow of damned Creatures, that it is everlasting and has no End? What unknown Twinges in the Conscience doth this Thought give to the Gnawing of the cruel Worm, (viz.) that 'tis a Worm that never dies? What unconceivable Force and Sting of Torment does this add to the Fire of God's Indignation in Hell, that it is a Fire which shall never be quenched? When one Year of Torment and Sorrow is ended, or one thousand Years are come to their Period, the Case of Sinners is still much the same, the Vengeance remains still as heavy as ever, and seems as far off from its End. This dreadful Price, which the Justice of God demands for the Reparation of our Offences against his Law and his Authority, is a Price which Creatures can never pay, for it is infinite; and therefore when a finite Creature begins to make Payment thereof with his own Sufferings, these Sufferings must be everlasting.*

It is evident, that one wilful Sin is sufficient to sink Creatures under the Indignation of a God for six thousand Years: I call the Angels who sinned for Witnesses to this Truth: They were formed in Holiness and in Glory before the Creation of this lower World, and probably they sinned and fell before this Creation too; and they are yet imprisoned and confined under perpetual Chains of Darkn^ess, as the Word of God tells us, and reserved to everlasting Punishment at the Judgment of the great Day. And if thou, O Sinner, among the Sons of Men, if thou diest in an unregenerate, unholy and unpardon'd State, the Sins of thy whole Life are charged upon thee, and thou art daily *treasuring up Wrath against the Day of Wrath*, and thou shalt not escape from this Prison till thou hast paid the utmost Farthing. Rom. ii. 5. Mat. v. 26.

If one Sin deserves all this Misery which has been described, what a dreadful Reckoning will the Sins of thy whole Life come to, when every Command of God which thou hast broken shall appear and Demand Reparation for its injured Honour? Remember, O Sinner, obstinate and rebellious, remember thou hast to do with a great and dreadful God, who has all thine Iniquities ever before his Eyes,
Isa.

Iſa. lvi. 5. Behold they are written before me, and I will recompense, ſaith the Lord, their Iniquity into their Boſom. He is a God that will never forget any one of thy Crimes. Amos viii. 7. The Lord hath ſworn by the Excellency of Jacob, ſurely I will never forget any of their Works. Though thou haſt loſt and forgot them, he will bring them again into thy Conſcience with a terrible Remembrance; and when this God comes forth in a Way of Vengeance, every Tranſgreſſion and Diſobedience ſhall receive a juſt Recompence of Reward. Vengeance belongeth unto me, ſaith the Lord, Heb. ii. 2. and x. 30. He that ſpared not his own Son, when he laid on him the Iniquity of us all, will never ſpare thee who art the perſonal and criminal Tranſgreſſor. Eternal Recompences are due to the Demands of Juſtice, and he will puniſh till full Payment is made, equal to the Evil of Sin, i. e. to all everlaſting.

Reſlect. II. What infinite and eternal Concerns of Men hang upon the ſhort and ſlender Thread of human Life? An eternal Heaven or an eternal Hell depend on our good or ill Behaviour in this ſhort and mortal State. While Life remains the Sinner's Hope remains; he abides on the Stage of Action, and this is the State of Trial for Eternity: But as ſoon as the Thread of Life is broken, immediately enſues endleſs Joy or endleſs Sorrow.

What a poor fleeting Vapour, what a thin and frail Bubble is this feeble and uncertain Thing which we call *Life*? And yet what Matters of immenſe Importance depend upon it? This preſent Life is a Prize put into our Hands, for 'tis the only Time given us to obtain Deliverance and Escape from eternal Death: Life in this View, as mere a Bubble and Vapour as it is, carries in it ſomething of infinite and everlaſting Moment: But alas, how wretchedly does fooliſh and ſinful Mankind trifle and ſquander it away amidſt a thouſand Vanities and Impertinencies, or ſaunter it out in Sloth and Lazineſs, with an utter diſregard of the important Eternity that depends upon it? What Multitudes are there that waſte the golden Hours of Grace, and the Seasons of Hope, in procuring to themſelves by their own wilful Iniquities, a Length of Damnation and everlaſting Deſpair?

While we dwell here in the miſt of the Means of Mercy and Salvation, there is hope that our ſinful Souls may be
healed

healed of that Disease which is breeding the ever-gnawing Worm within us. We may prevent the Fuel of divine Wrath from kindling into a Flame which cannot be quenched: But when once the Clock of Life has gone thro' its appointed Spaces, and the last Hour strikes, whether it be three or five, whether at twelve at Noon or at Midnight, all Hope is for ever gone; we are plunged into the Regions of Death, Despondency and Darkness, and nothing remains but the actual Torture of the *Worm* of Conscience to seize on us, and the *Fire* of divine Anger actually breaks out, which shall burn to the lowest Hell.

O could we but behold ourselves in the Glass of Wisdom, while we are yet standing upon the slippery Edge of this burning Precipice, and playing with painted Bubbles there, or in warm Pursuit of a flying shining Feather along the Brink of this burning Torrent, what Fools and Madmen should we appear to be even in our own Eyes! And yet we go on to practise this Folly, this Madness, Day after Day, in spite of all the Warnings of God and Man, till at last our Foot slips in some dreadful Moment, and we vanish out of the Sight of our Companions, and are lost for ever.

Reflect. III. If the Miseries of Hell are eternal, *how unreasonable a thing is it ever to suffer the loss of any Possessions or Joys which are temporal and perishing, to come into Competition with them?* Surely there is nothing that belongs to Time that should tempt us to run the Risque of the Sorrows of Eternity, nor allure us to commit one Sin against God, which is the fatal Spring of such Sorrows! Stand still, O Sinner, and hearken to the Voice of Wisdom. Do the Pleasures of Sense, or the Gaieties of Sight, or the Wealth or Grandeurs of this Life allure thee to make thy Way boldly thro' any *Means* toward the Possession of them, think with thyself, is it by offending this Great and Dreadful God? And wilt thou dare to take one Step towards these dangerous and deceitful Vanities, and risque thine immortal Welfare in the Pursuit? What a foolish Bargain wilt thou make to *gain the whole World* of short-liv'd perishing Trifles, and to *lose thy Soul* in endless Perdition? *Mark viii. 36.* Dare any of us venture an eternal State of Torment to gain the flattering and delusive Joy of a short Hour, or a Winter's Day?

What

What are all the Gratifications of Flesh and Sense? What are all the swelling Titles of Honour amongst Men? What are all the Treasures of this perishing World? How short is their Duration, and how short is thy Possession of them? All earthly Felicities *perish in the using*, and are no sooner enjoy'd but are quickly lost again, or expire in the Enjoyment: But if the Ruin of a Soul, and a lost Heaven, be the Price of them, how mad is the Purchase, and how wretched is the Purchaser?

Reflect. IV. *How patiently should we bear all the Labours and Fatigues, the Pains and Miseries of this mortal Life, when we have any Hope of our Deliverance from the Pains and Sorrows of Immortality?* As for our Maladies and Sorrows here on Earth, blessed be God they are not eternal: There are some Intervals to relieve, and there is some Period to finish them. When we ask a Friend who is sick and in Pain, "*How fare you?*" I'm in Pain now, says he, but I hope I shall be easy anon: I am sick to-day, but I trust I shall be in Health to-morrow." This is a sweet Mitigation of the present Uneasiness, and gives Relief to the Patient. But how dreadful and piercing would these Accents be, if we should hear our Friend make this Answer to us, "I am all over in extreme Pain and Anguish, and I shall never, never be eased of it: I lie under exquisite Torment of the Flesh, and Horror in my Soul, and I shall for ever feel this Horror and this Torment." Such is the Case of the damned Sinners in Hell, and therefore their Agonies are intolerable.

But if you have any comfortable Prospect of the Pardon of Sin, and a well-grounded Hope of eternal Salvation thro' the Blood of *Christ*, and by the Rules and Promises of the Gospel, all the temporal Toils and Plagues that can possibly stand between us and Heaven shall be despised and disregarded by us, and we should learn to triumph over them with the victorious Songs of Thankfulness and Praise. Blessed be the Name of our God, *tho' he has smitten us sorely, yet he has not given us over to everlasting Death.*

Let our Thoughts ascend to the heavenly Regions, and let us ask those who are arrived thither out of the Land of Temptation and Conflict, out of these Tabernacles of Sin and Sorrow; let us ask them, what gave them so divine a Courage and so firm Patience in the midst of all their Trials? With one Voice they will all make Answer, 'Twas the
View

View of our Deliverance from an eternal Hell, and the Hopes of obtaining Salvation by *Christ Jesus* with eternal Glory; 'tis this that supported us under every Burden, and bore us on with a Spirit of Faith and Victory thro' every Hardship on Earth. 'Twas for this we labour'd, and suffer'd, and *counted not Life*, nor any of the Blessings of it *dear to us*, nor any of the Sorrows of it intolerable, that we might escape the everlasting Sorrows of a future State, and enjoy the Blessings of Life eternal. And, O may every one of us *be the Followers of those who thro' this Faith and Patience have obtain'd the promised Felicity*! May we also make our Way, by the same Motives, thro' the Floods and the Fires of Affliction and Distress, to reach this everlasting Heaven, and to escape everlasting Burnings!

In order to confirm our Patience, and to animate our Zeal, let us survey the blessed Example of *St. Paul*, who was reproached, who was buffeted, who was persecuted with Stones, and Whips, and Scourges, and bore a thousand Indignities, who was assaulted with endless Strokes of Injury and Violence, and yet rejoiced in the midst of all his Sufferings in the View of his eternal Hope. The Spirit of Faith in the midst of all his Sufferings taught him to sing this divine Song, *Our light Afflictions, which are but for a Moment, are working for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory. The Sufferings of this present Time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed*, 2 Cor. iv. 17. Rom. viii. 18. Nor are they worthy to be compar'd with that exceeding and eternal Weight of Vengeance, from which we are deliver'd by Faith and patient Obedience to the Gospel of our Lord *Jesus Christ*.

Reflect. V. *If the Miseries of Hell are eternal, we can never have our Deliverance from them made too secure.* If the Danger of any Mischief, to which we might be exposed, were but slight, and the Duration of it short, there might be possibly some Excuse for our Delay to escape it: But when it is total and irrevokable Ruin to which we are liable every Moment while we continue in a State of Sin, we should fly with all the Wings of our Souls, and never be at ease or quiet till we are got without the Reach of Danger, and settled in a Place of Safety, or on the Rock of our Salvation.

O could we but perceive a thousandth Part of the Horror that is contain'd in an eternal Hell, an eternal Banishment from the Face and Favour of God, and the eternal Impressions of

his Anger, we should never give our selves Rest one Moment, till we had returned to God by a sincere Repentance, and were reconciled to him that made us ; till we fled for Refuge to the Blood of *Jesus*, and to his sanctifying Grace, which is the only Hope that is set before us. We should never give ourselves leave to lie down, or awake in quiet, while we were destitute of a saving Interest in the Salvation of *Christ*, and had attained to some clear Evidence of it, and a well-grounded Hope.

Have we not sometimes felt the *Worm of Conscience* begin to gnaw within us, and to prey upon our Spirits after the Commission of some Sin ? And shall we not apply ourselves with all holy Speed to the divine Physician who can kill this gnawing Worm within us, and can heal those sinful Maladies that are breeding it ? Have we not sometimes felt the Threatnings of the Wrath of God in his Law, like a *Fire* in our Bones ? With what infinite Desire then, and what restless Vehemence should we fly to the Blood of *Jesus* our great Sacrifice, which alone can quench the fiery Indignation of God, and prevent it from growing up to an everlasting Flame ?

Had we upon our Spirits such a Sense of the Terrors of the Lord in Hell, as his Threatnings represent, we should never be satisfy'd with such cold doubtful Hopes of our Deliverance from them, as thousands of nominal Christians are contented with ; but we should make every needful and critical Enquiry, whether our Repentance were sincere, whether our Faith in *Christ* were unfeigned, whether our Hopes had a solid Foundation in the divine Promise : We should search every Power of our Souls, and examine our Hearts through every Corner, whether Sin be mortify'd there, whether the Christian Virtues are formed within us, and the divine Image is begun to be stamp'd upon our Minds : We should be restless and Impatient in our inward Searches, whether we are made new Creatures, whether we are born of God and become his Children, and are secur'd by his Gospel from this everlasting Vengeance. The Degree and the infinite Duration of this Misery should appoint the Proportion of our Zeal and Solitude to escape it.

A Man who sees or feels his own House on Fire under him, does not continue upon his Bed of Sloth, or sit amusing himself among the Ornaments of his Chamber, till the Flames have broke thro' and seized him : But with huge Outcries he seeks for Help, and flies in haste for his Life wheresoever he finds a
Way.

Way. Such should be the Language, and such the Activity of sinful Creatures, to escape the Wrath to come ; and such will be the Outcries of Sinners when they are thorowly awa-ken'd : This Language of every Place, and of every Hour will then beawaken'd, *What shall I do to be saved? Whither shall I fly for Refuge?* O blessed *Jesus*, receive me into thy Protection, and be thou my Deliverer.

Give me leave to repeat this sort of Expostulation with lingering and delaying Sinners, or with drowzy and formal Christians. If you would set yourselves often in the Blaze of these everlasting Burnings, you would never satisfy yourselves with such cold faint Wishes, such lazy Endeavours, such languid Efforts of Faith and Repentance to escape this fiery Indignation that shall never be quenched : Nor would you content yourselves with dark and doubtful Evidences of your Interest in the Love of God, and the Grace of our Lord *Jesus* ; but you would be Day and Night busy with your own Hearts in the most intimate and careful Search after converting Grace and living Christianity : You would never be at rest till you felt the new Nature working with Power and bright Evidence within you, that you might be able to say, “ We know there “ is no Condemnation belongs to us, but that we are passed “ from Death unto Life.”

Let us proceed upon this Subject, turning the Discourse from ourselves to our Friends and say, With what Fervour of Love, with what holy Zeal and Compassion should we labour to save our Friends and all that are dear to us from this eternal Destruction? What Words of fiery Terror shall we chuse to awaken those who slumber on the Edge of endless Burnings? What Language of kind and tender Passion shall we chuse to reach their Hearts? What Phrases of melting Pity to hasten their Escape from this Precipice of burning Ruin, or to pluck them as Brands out of the Fire before it becomes unquenchable? *Knowing these Terrors of the Lord*, with what Vehemence of Zeal should we try to persuade Men, our Fellow-Mortals, that they would not venture into the midst of these Miseries, and beseech them in the Name of *Christ* to be reconciled to God? This was the Practice, and these the Motives of the great Apostle, as he describes them at the latter End of the fifth Chapter in his second Epistle to the *Corinthians*.

O with what Force of ardent and active Compassion should

Ministers preach both the Curses of the Law, and the Grace of the blessed Gospel, to perishing Sinners, and make haste to rescue their Souls from this everlasting Vengeance? With what warm and solicitous Zeal should they lay hold of those poor thoughtless Wretches who are madly indulging their Lusts and Follies, and thereby preparing themselves to become fit Fuel for this eternal Fire? They are forming themselves by their Iniquities to become Vessels of this everlasting Indignation: Let us seize them by some kind and constraining Words of Love, some Outcries of Compassion and Fear, lest they rush into those Flames which will never be quenched: Perhaps when they are summoned away from us by the Stroke of Death, they may leave us in most uncomfortable Sorrows for our Neglect, while they are suffering the long endless Punishment due to their own Iniquities.

Reflect. VI. *How unreasonable a thing is it for us Ministers, who are charged and intrusted with the whole Counsel of God for the Salvation of Men, to avoid the Mention of these his eternal Terrors in our Sermons, and in our Addresses to mortal Creatures; Creatures who are daily preparing themselves for them by their Sins, and are ready to plunge into the midst of them! Has not our blessed Saviour made frequent Mention of them in his Gospel, and set them in their dreadful Array before his Hearers? Has he not expressed them in their strongest Terms, and spread them in their most frightful Colours, and set them in their full and everlasting Extent, before the Sinners which attended his Ministry? And did he ever give any Hint that they should be understood in a milder Sense? Have not the Apostles followed their Lord in the same dreadful Display of the sharp and ever-during Punishments of Hell? And have they taught us to qualify these Terrors by gentler Interpretations of them? And have not such kind of Discourses been abundantly blessed in the Providence of God, both in ancient and in later Ages to awaken and save Multitudes of the Souls of Men.*

How many holy and happy Spirits are now rejoicing before God, and before the Throne of his Love, and encompassed with all the Joys of Immortality, who owe the Beginnings of their Repentance, and the first Turn of their Souls towards Faith and Salvation to such Words of Terror as these? How many of the Saints on high have been first awaken'd from their deadly Sleep in Sin by the Ministrations of this eternal Vengeance of God? How many have been frightened out of their
Indolence

In dolence at first by the Discovery of these everlasting Horrors of Conscience and Agonies of Soul? The Dread of the Worm that never dies has affrighted their Consciences from a Course of Sin: The fiery Indignation which shall never be quenched has flashed in their Bosoms from the Lips of the Preacher, and has set them all over trembling, and filled all their inward Powers with Dismay and Anguish: Their Tongue has broke into loud and earnest Enquiries, *Who shall deliver me from this eternal Death? How shall I escape this everlasting Wrath to come?* And the Spirit of God by degrees has led them to *Jesus*, and his atoning Blood, his Gospel, his Righteousness and his converting Grace, as the only way of Deliverance and Salvation.

How unreasonable a thing is it for Ministers in their Preaching to soften these Terrors of the Lord, to cut short these endless Horrors and Anguish, and to mitigate the Miseries of Hell and Damnation, since even all that Length and Eternity in which *Christ* and his Apostles preached these Terrors, have not been sufficient to reclaim Mankind from their Iniquities; but Multitudes of them, in the Face of all these Threatnings, still persist in the broad Way to Destruction and Death?

Can we possibly do any Honour to the Ministry of our blessed Lord, or is there any real Service done to the Souls of Men by our fond and vain Reasonings to shorten these Sorrows, and put a Period to these threatned Torments? Will the blessed *Jesus*, when he sits on the Throne of Judgment, give us Thanks for runing counter to the Language of his own Ministry, and for daring to contradict his denounced Vengeance?

By the various Expressions and Representations of this Matter in Scripture, in such solemn and dreadful Language, must I not suppose that the Blessed God, and our Lord *Jesus Christ*, design'd and intended that Mankind should believe the Pains and Punishments of Hell will be eternal? Can I then be censured for endeavouring to establish and promote the awful Doctrine which both God the Father and his Son intended should be believed, and by which they design'd to guard both the Law and the Gospel? A Doctrine which was left on Record to deter Sinners from the Paths of Sin and Destruction, and to awaken the Souls and Consciences of Men to Repentance? On the other hand, can those Teachers be approved of God or good Men, whose evident Design is to lead the World to disbelieve this solemn and terrible Warning of the Great God?

Let

Let us proceed in these Enquiries, and address ourselves to those wicked and miserable Creatures, who are actually suffering this divine Vengeance. Let us ask them, how they approve of this sort of Preaching which withholds from the Eyes and Ears, and Consciences of Men, the most dreadful Circumstance of these Horrors? Will any of the damned Wretches of Hell thank us for hiding so dreadful a Part of these Miseries from them? Will they bless us for lessening the threatned Curses and Indignation of a God? "No, says the condemned Wretch, Those Preachers are worthy of my Curses and not my Thanks, who abated these Terrors of the Lord, and shorten'd his threatned Punishment; for they persuaded me to hope there would be an End of my Misery, and thereby tempted me to venture upon those Sins which I should have renounced with Abomination, had I believed the Words of God, and these everlasting Torments. O cursed and cruel Preachers, who by softning and curtailing the Sentence of eternal Misery, gave a sort of Licence to my Wickedness, and broke one of the strongest Bars that restrain'd me from sinning! 'Tis by this sort of Flattery they paved my Way down to Hell, and have bro't me into this Prison, this eternal Anguish, whence there is no Release *."

Say, ye who preach that the Gates of Hell shall one Day be open'd to let out the Prisoners, ye who tell Sinners there is a Time of Release for them, say, Do ye expect to fright them out of their Sins by lessening their Fear of God and his Wrath to come? Do ye hope to bring obstinate and impenitent Rebels to a more speedy Remorse for Sin, and to begin a Life of Holiness, by persuading them that these Terrors of God shall have an End? Can ye imagine that such vain Tidings, such soothing Flattery will ever melt them to Repentance and Love, when all the Grace of the Gospel mingled with the Blood and Tears of the Son of God will not do it? Would not this manner of Preaching rather encourage them to run on still in their Rebelions, and make them more regardless of their highest Interest? Would it not tempt them to give a loose to their vilest Inclinations, and all the flagrant and abominable Enormities of their own Heart, when they shall be told that these Punishments, which the Bible calls *everlasting*, shall one Day come to an End?

Besides, I believe it has been observed in every Age, that the Fears of this *Worm which never dies*, and this *eternal Fire which shall never be quenched*, have been made abundantly useful in the Providence of God to lay a powerful Restraint on the unruly Vices of some Sinners, who

* Some of the ancients have called those Preachers, who shorten the Pains of Hell, the *merciful* or *compassionate Doctors*: And Dr. T. Burnet calls those *merciless* or *uncompassionate*, who preach the Eternity of it: But I think it will appear one Day, that those are truly the *compassionate* Writers and Teachers who most effectually affright and prevent Men from Sin and Damnation; and those who have given wicked Men hope of their Release from Hell, will be in danger of being charged with smoothing their Way to this Misery, by softening the Terrors of it. have

have never been awaken'd and drawn into saving Penitence, or reclaim'd to a Life of sincere Holiness. And if the Restraint of this Terror were taken away, how much more would all Iniquity abound among those who have no inward Principle of Goodness?

Let us proceed then to preach the same Terror which the blessed *Jesus* thought not unworthy of his Ministry; and may the Providence and the Grace of God give Success to our Labours, both for the restraining the extravagant Vices of the Wicked, for the saving Conversion of many Sinners, and for a Guard and Restraint to the young and wavering Christians †.

Notwithstanding all the express Language of Scripture on our Side of the Question, and all our Arguments drawn from it; yet there are some of the Reasoners and the Disputers of this World, who will still suppose that 'tis more for the Honour of God, and for the Glory of our blessed Saviour, for Ministers to dwell always upon the Promises of the new Covenant and the Riches of the Grace of *Christ*, and the Overflowing Measures of the Love of God, in order to save sinful Men. "Surely," say they, Preachers have tried long enough what the Words of Terror will do; let us now allure sinful Men to be reconciled to God by a Ministry of universal Love and Grace; and let us see whether the boundless Compassions of a God, in putting a final Period to the Miseries of his guilty Creatures after a certain Number of Years, will not draw Sinners with a sweeter Violence to the Love and Obedience of their Maker, than all this Doctrine of Severity and Terror.

In the first Place I answer, that surely *Jesus* himself, who is the prime Minister of his Father's Kingdom, and the divinest Messenger

† The late Dr. *Thomas Burnet*, in his *Latin* Treatise of the State of the Dead, and those who rise again, opposes the Doctrine of the Eternity of future Punishments, and shews who of the ancient Fathers seem to be of the same Opinion with him: But he tells us, that these ancient Fathers, when they treated of this Subject, often gave the same Advice to others, which he himself gives in these Words. "Whatsoever you determine within yourself, and in your own Breast, concerning these Punishments, whether they are eternal or no, yet you ought to use the common Doctrine and the common Language when you preach or speak to the People, especially those of the lower Rank, who are ready to run headlong into Vice, and are to be restrain'd from Evil only by the Fear of Punishment: And even among good Christians, there are Infants to be nourished with Milk; nor is their Diet to be rashly changed, lest thro' Intemperance they fall into Diseases."

And he adds in the Margin, "Whosoever shall translate these Sentiments into our Mother Tongue, I shall think it was done with an evil Design and to bad Purpose." So that if this were a true Doctrine, yet the learned Author agrees, that neither the holy Writers of the Bible, nor the Fathers, think it proper that the Bulk of the People should know it. But if it should not be translated, I would ask, why did the Author write it and leave it to be published? Did he suppose all Men and Boys, who understood *Latin*, to be sufficiently guarded against the Abuse of such an Opinion?

of his Love, knew better than we do how to pay the highest Honour to his heavenly Father, and to display his own Grace. Surely he was well acquainted with the best Way to begin with Sinners in order to their Reconciliation to God, and knew also the most effectual Avenues to the Consciences of sinful Creatures, incomparably beyond what any of us can pretend to. Had he not as tender a Sense of the Honour of his Father's Mercy, as warm a Zeal for the Glory of his own Grace and Gospel, and as wise and melting a Compassion for the Souls of Men as the best of us can boast of? And yet he tho't it proper to lay the Foundation of his own, and his Apostles Ministrations of Grace, in this Language of Terror, in these Threatnings of eternal Punishment. And in the Course of his Providence throughout all Ages he has, in some measure, made this Doctrine successful to recover Souls from the Snares of the Devil, and to enlarge his own heavenly Kingdom.

But I answer further, It must be granted that the Tempers of Men are various, and 'tis possible that some may be of so ingenuous and refined a Disposition, that the Words of Love and Grace, without any Terror, might reach their Hearts, and thro' the Influences of Heaven, touch them effectually. But as for the Bulk of Mankind, while they continue in their Sins, daily Experience convinceth us, that they are best awaken'd by the Terrors of the Lord, by a Representation of the gnawing *Worm which never dies*, and the *Fire which shall not be quenched*. I never knew but one Person in the whole Course of my Ministry, who acknowledged, that the first Motions of Religion in their own Heart arose from a Sense of the Goodness of God, and that they were gently and sweetly led at first to this Enquiry, *What shall I render to the Lord who hath dealt so bountifully with me?* But I think all besides, who have come within my Notice, have rather been first awaken'd by the Passion of Fear to fly from the Wrath to come.

If therefore we will practise according to the Example of *Jesus*, the greatest and the wisest Prophet of his Church, and his holy Apostles, and the best of Preachers in all Ages who have followed him, if we would obey the Dictates of long Experience, and our best Observations on the Methods of converting Grace, I think we must proceed to denounce these eternal Terrors of the Lord against the Transgressors of his Law and the Despisers of his Gospel. This seems to be the appointed and most effectual Way to rouse their Consciences to seek a Deliverance from the Curses of the Law, which carry in them everlasting Punishment. This appears to be the first Spring of Religion in sinful Men, and the first Motive to receive the glad Tidings of Salvation which are display'd in the New Testament. This spurs on their Passions to escape the Vengeance of God, by flying to his Gospel, where there is rich and abundant Grace to encourage the Hope of rebellious Creatures in their Returns to God by *Jesus Christ* the Saviour. To *Jesus*, who is the awful Messenger of his Father's Terrors, and the prime Minister of his Love, be Glory and Honour to everlasting Ages. Amen. NO 61